Fadhil al-Rubaiee

IMAGINED ISRAEL

A Contribution to the Correction of the Official History of the Ancient Kingdom of Israel

Book I

EXODUS REVISITED

Translated from Arabic
by

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INTRODUCTION

There was never, in the ancient Levant, a great kingdom called "Israel". Nor was there a historical monarch known as "Solomon", or a hero by the name of "David". The alleged founder of this kingdom, "Saul son of Qish", never set foot in Palestine. Moreover, and in all certainty, David never crossed the Euphrates, nor did the boundaries of his domain extend from Iraq to Egypt. These fabled images quite simply have no basis in the Bible. In other words, an imaginary kingdom has been hyped to almost mythical proportions, throughout many centuries, based solely on the writings of Judaic priests.

Notwithstanding these assertions, there was, at one point in time, a small, Vatican-like state that existed within the fold of the larger kingdom of Saba' (Sheba). This tribal domain, referred to as *mikhlāf* in the colloquial Yemeni dialects, eventually split into two religious factions: Northern and Southern. This was the result of a political schism within its parent entity, which became divided into two kingdoms: Sabaic in the north and Ḥimyaritic in the south.

This book constitutes the first part of Volume One in ***Imagined Israel: A Contribution to the Correction of the Official History of Ancient Israel,*** which comprises several books dealing primarily with the Torah (the Pentateuch). It will be followed by a second volume, under the same title, also containing a number of books which deal with the relatively late chapters of the Old Testament scripture. These two volumes are a continuation of our previous work, ***Imagined Palestine: Land of the Torah in Old Yemen,*** first published in 2008.

The theory presented in this new endeavor is centered on the following idea: Ancient Israel, as configured in the consciousness of the generations, whether through academic literature, orientalist research, or the archaeological expeditions in Palestine conducted by scholars belonging to the traditional Biblical schools is, indeed and truly, an imagined entity. It is a kingdom that was born from a false, non-historical narrative, not backed by any physical evidence, whereby it was perceived as a vast domain occupying a territory extending from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Its heroic son, David, was alleged to have crossed the Euphrates River, seized the Syrian town of Ḥamah, before

traversing the path from the outskirts of Damascus to Mount Zion, which he supposedly ascended before annexing Jerusalem.

As was the case with imagined Palestine, which emerged from the womb of a false perception claiming it to be the Jewish "Promised Land", an imagined Israel was, in turn, born of this same fabric. Consequently, the orientalist imagination has given birth to a fictitious kingdom of which no record has ever been found.

In these two upcoming volumes, we will reconstruct the actual narrative pertaining to Ancient Israel, and attempt to correct its official history, while uncovering the necessary clues to a ghastly manipulation thereof.

It is paramount for the reader to make a note of the following point, at the onset of this study:

Whereas, in **Imagined Palestine,** we presented a theory stating that the geography of the Torah is that of Yemen, we now undertake the expansion of this idea by presenting a complementary thesis which seeks to transfer this same geography to the history of that country. Thus, by the end of this volume, it will no longer be possible for anyone to claim that we are merely looking for similarities between the names of places which feature in the Old Testament and the corresponding locations in Yemen. The issue, from this point onwards, is one of history and culture, not merely a geographical theater.

Readers who are familiar with our work will note that we have made some necessary changes to the places and locations described in our previous publications. This is due to the fact that we could not provide a comprehensive and integrated perception of the geography in question, ten years ago. It is normal for theories to evolve and grow more and more in the context of diligent research; for no theory is born all at once. Solving the seemingly complex contradictions in the Biblical text cannot be expected with the mere wave of a magic wand. Such an undertaking requires a sustained and systematic effort.

In order to correct the narrative of Ancient Israel, we will begin by re-interpreting the Book of Exodus in particular, by means of an alternate translation of the original Hebrew scripture, away from the prevailing, mythological understanding of its texts. We will present a new vision of the

narrative as being a religious fable, rather than a historical account. Based on scientific data and real, objective research, we will propose a different scenario which seeks to disassemble and reconstruct the age-old puzzle of the Biblical events.

We have, in Exodus, three great dilemmas:

- Where was the Biblical land of Miṣrim[*] located?
- Where was the border of Canaan in relation to Miṣrim?
- Where exactly was the "Promised Land"?

These puzzling issues, which have long been the subject of deliberate manipulations, can be gradually but surely resolved, by means of a retranslation of the scripture, which seeks to place the events in their correct cultural environment, namely the land of Yemen. Without this measure, it will be nigh impossible to fully grasp the implications of the Torah.

<div align="right">Fadhil al-Rubaiee
2017</div>

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[*] We have elected to render the names of Biblical places and landmarks not as they appear in the English translations, but closer to how they are actually vocalized in the original Hebrew dialect. For instance, the name *Mizraim* has been represented in the more accurate and scientific form of *Miṣrim,* throughout this text.

Linguistic Clarifications

For a deeper understanding of the Torah scripture, it is imperative to note some observations, which are based on the writer's own scientific and field experience in translating Hebrew.

First: The original language of the Biblical text, in our opinion, is not actually a language – in the accurate sense of the word – but an ancient South Arabian dialect. Even today, Yemeni Jews whose native tongue is Arabic speak Hebrew as a religious vernacular. Their pronunciation of Hebrew words is also very distinct from that of European Jews, in that the Yemenis actually employ certain Arabic letters not vocalized by their Western counterparts, namely *Thā', Jīm, Ṣād, Ḍād, Ṭā, Ḏāl,* and *Ghayn.* They also add diacritical marks to Hebrew letters. Yemeni Jews are especially known for their eloquent recitation of the Torah, be it in terms of the proper enunciation of Hebrew characters, or the enhancement of the oration with their characteristic melodious tune. They are also equally capable of reciting the scripture in Arabic and Aramaic.

Second: There is a practically infinite symmetry of vocabulary and words which confirms the relation between ancient Hebrew and the Sabaic dialects. We will give one, simple example here, for analytical purposes.

In the ancient inscription designated as "Ja 641", we encounter the following passage, inscribed in Musnad (South Arabian) letters, which consists of the first seven lines of a dedicatory engraving discovered at the base of a statue, unearthed in Ma'rib, Yemen:

{Qs²n ʾ**s²wʿ** w-bnẔ-[h]Ẕ(w) ʾb—
krb bnw Ṣʿqn **Ẕ[h]Ẕ(q)ny(w)**
ʾlmqh Ṯhwn bʿl ʾwẔ(m)(ṣl)—
mn bn ġnm-hmw ḏ-ġnmw( )Ẕ(b)—
n **qrytm** b-kn s¹bʾw l-s²w[ʿ]—
n mrʾ-hmw S²ʿrm ʾwtr m—
lk S¹bʾ w-ḏ-Rydn ḥg-n s²—}

The highlighted terms *ʾ**s²wʿ*** (first line), ***hqnyw*** (second line) and ***qrytm*** (fifth line), are the equivalents of the Hebrew name *Yshwʿ* (ישוע), and the words *yqnhw* (יקנהו) and *qryt* (קרית), respectively.

To paraphrase the above fragment:

*Qashn **Ashu'** and his son Abkarb, of the clan of Sa'qn, **present (as a gift)** to al-Maqah, Thahwān, Ba'l (lord) of Awām, this statue from the booty which they seized from the **village** of Bakn, when they undertook the raid and achieved victory for their liege, Sha'r Awtar, king of Saba' and Dhū Raydān, as they promised to…***[1]

It appears that the man named *Ashu' – Yshu'*, who inscribed the glyph, belonged to a tribe called *Sa'qn,* and bore the religious title of *Qash – Qashn*, which is comparable to the designation of "Reverend", common in Christianity. Thus, Ashu', who may have been some kind of warrior-priest, commemorated a victorious raid which he undertook with his son, Ab-Karb, to a village called *Bak – Bakn.* As a token of their gratitude to al-Maqah, the Lord of Awām (thought to be a South Arabian deity venerated by the tribes of Saba'), they bestowed *(hqnyw)* the statue from the spoils that fell into their hands.

The Hebrew verb *yqnhw* (יקנהו) appears numerous times in the Old Testament scripture, where it can mean either "to acquire for someone" or "to bestow to someone". For instance, in Genesis, we come across the word in the following passage:

And Joseph was brought down to **Miṣrim** and **acquired** by Photiphar, an officer of Phar'h, the captain of the guard, a **Miṣrite,** from the hand of the Ishmaelites, who had brought him down there (Genesis 39:1).

It should be noted that the *-n* suffix, which very often appears in Sabaic terms or nouns, is a trademark of the old South Arabian vocal customs. Some linguists have speculated that it may have been a precursor to the Arabic prefix article *al-* (which corresponds to "the" in English). If this is indeed true, then *Qashn* could be understood as *al-Qash* (hence, *al-Qash Ashū'*, meaning "the Reverend Yeshua"), whereas the name *Bakn*, which designates a town, would be equivalent to *al-Bak*, in classical Arabic. In any case, this *-n* suffix is superfluous, and can be discarded without affecting the significance of the word.

1) Source of the translation: **Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions – Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions** – "Ja 641 + Ja 779".

This basic example serves to confirm the deeply-rooted, organic relation between Hebrew and the ancient Sabaic language, and demonstrates the tradition of writing words according to their vocalization – a phenomenon Hebrew is also known for. This could only mean that Hebrew and the dialects of Yemen emerged from the same historical and cultural milieu[*]. In time, this dialectic trend – which we will encounter very often throughout our research – will invalidate any and all baseless allegations that we are merely searching for similarities between the Biblical place names and the geography of Yemen. What we are looking for is not merely a geographical match, but an entire historical environment, replete with its social and religious customs.

Third: Place names which feature in masculine form in the Hebrew scripture are often feminized in Arabic (and vice versa). This is also due to the vocal traditions observed in the Yemeni dialects. For example, the famous Baysh Valley of the Jīzān province of Saudi Arabia is often referred to as *Bayshah.* Consequently, when we come across the name *Ṣphun* (צפון) in the Torah, we should keep in mind that its Arabic counterpart is Ṣafūnah. In fact, it is even possible for the **same** name to feature in both the masculine and feminine forms within the Hebrew text itself, as will be demonstrated in time.

Fourth: Another common aspect of Sabaic and Hebrew is the use of ancient definite article prefixes, notably *h-, t-,* and *y-,* which serve the same purpose as the *n-* suffix mentioned above. Thus, the Hebrew name *Y'rim* (יערים) would correspond to *al-'Arm* in Arabic, while Ḥwrwn (חורן) could be read either as *Ḥūrān* or *al-Ḥūr.*

Fifth: Whereas the Sabaic tribes were known for inserting the *–n* suffix in nouns (both common and proper), their neighbors and adversaries to the south, the Ḥimyarites, were famous for the *–m* suffix, which served the same purpose. Moreover, this suffix, which can be used to denote either the dual or plural in Hebrew, also had the same function in the Ḥimyaritic dialect.

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* David Samuel Margoliouth, a renowned English orientalist, stated in his lectures ***The Relations between Arabs and Israelites prior to the Rise of Islam****,* first published in 1924, that the original homeland of the Israelites (before they migrated to the Levant) was indeed Yemen; the country from which many nations emerged in antiquity. To support his view, Margoliouth presented various clues, including the startling similarities between the social customs, habits and religious ethics of the Israelites on one hand, and those of the South Arabians during the pre-Islamic era on the other. He also pointed out the presence of countless words and expressions which were common to both Hebrew and the Sabaic tongues. Hebrew proper nouns were also very popular among the Arabian tribes, and many of them appear in the ancient Sabaic and Thamudic inscriptions.

These linguistic characteristics, of which numerous examples will be encountered in this book, are worthy of note as the reader pursues the alternate Biblical theater being presented herein.

Photo 1: Fragment of Musnad Inscription "Ja 641"
(Source: Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions)

Contextual Remarks

Our understanding of the legendary story of the Exodus hinges on two important observations.

First: There is no mention, in any written and verified historical record, of a mass departure of Israelites from Egypt, nor of their escape via the so-called "Sinai Peninsula", towards Palestine. Every effort by archeologists, Western and Arab alike, who have conducted extensive excavations in the area, has failed to unearth any physical evidence of this account. The Israelis themselves, who in the wake of the 1967 war, sent close to 4,000 experts and specialists to Sinai, and examined practically every grain of sand on the Peninsula, returned empty handed. This alone is sufficient to reject any notion of portraying the account of the Exodus as a historical event.

Second: Our view is that the story of the Israelites' departure from Miṣrim can best be interpreted as a religious anecdote of ritualistic nature, which concerns the migration of an autonomous community whose members embraced a certain fundamental creed that was radically divergent from those of their pagan neighbors. The chapters of the Old Testament which recount this story, namely the books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, forcefully confirm that the event was – at its core – a religious migration for the purpose of observing a new law, and the reverence of particular places or sites of worship, not merely to escape from oppression and tyranny. In this story, we find the recurrence of a typical plot concerning a symbolic migration, similar to Noah's break-up with his people – whereby the waters of the Great Flood could be compared to the wilderness of the Israelite wandering – and in the same vein as Abraham's journey from Ur-Kashdim to the land of Canaan.

The search for evidence of these migrations in the geography of Egypt and Palestine, or for traces of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat in Turkey, is doomed to dismal failure, and is no different than searching for Jonah's whale in a city that is not near a sea coast. In other words, the Exodus is not actually a historical event, but more precisely the account of a religious and ritualistic journey correlated with the birth of a religious creed. It is in many ways reminiscent of Muḥammad's migration from Makkah to Yathrib which, according to tradition, embodied the birth of Islam.

Every prophet or hero of folklore has been, in one way or another, linked to some sort of migration, for whatever purpose. Thus, Moses' departure from Miṣrim can be interpreted – from this perspective – as his migration, which led to the birth of a new community within the Tribes; a community that will eventually bear the name of its own creed or law: the Mosaic – Israelite religion.

On the other hand, and within this same context, several remarks should be noted by our non-specialist readers:

First: There is a tendency among the general public to confuse the concept of "Israelite", as being a tribal identity characterized by its adherence to a strictly monotheistic faith, with "Judaism", as being a religious creed. Even academic writers have fallen into this trap and used the two terms interchangeably. Thus, every Israelite is a Jew, and vice versa. This assumption is categorically

incorrect, from a historical and logical perspective. The tribal community of *Banū Isrā'īl* (Children of Israel) were led out of Miṣrim by Moses, sometime around 1300 B.C (as commonly postulated), in what became known as "The Exodus", during a time when the Jewish religion did not even exist. There is not even a hint, in the Pentateuch ascribed to Moses, that Judaism was the religion of the early Israelites. In fact, this term did not appear until after the dissolution of the unified kingdom, when Judaism began to crystallize in the books that were added to the original Torah scripture by priests and jurors, around 500 BC.

The Mosaic Canon was therefore the original religion of the first Israelite community, and was based on the monotheistic worship of the God "Yhwh" (יהוה). This name, which has raised a lot of questions until our present day, is actually an ancient reference to the "Most-High Who Shall Not Be Named", or the Lord who is to be referred only as "He Who Is", which corresponds to *huwa* in the Arabic language. Therefore, the term *Yhwh* is, in reality, the ancient Yemeni rendering of *y-Huwa*, as dictated by the South Arabian vocal traditions known for adding the *y-* prefix to many names. To state other examples of this phenomenon: *'Arab – Y'rab*, *Karb – Ykrab* and *Ḥamad – Yḥmad.*

The distinction between the concept of "Jews" and "Israelites" becomes all the more apparent when we consider the example of the Samaritans, who did not acknowledge the later books of the Jewish scripture as being Canon Law, viewing them as being fabrications on the part of the priests (*kahnim*). The Samaritans claimed to have the correct version of the scripture, that being the Torah of Moses. Technically, they considered themselves non-Jewish Israelites.

The monotheistic Israelite religion is in fact an ancient Arabian creed which predates the appearance of Judaism by at least 700 years. Its proponents, the *Banū Isrā'īl*, are mentioned with praise in the Qur'ān, whereas Judaism – as a religious sect – derived its name from that of the tribe of Judah (*Hūdhah – Yhūdhah*), after the defection of the other ten tribes of Israel, during the reign of Rehoboam (Raḥb-'Am), the son of Solomon (Sulaymān). It follows then that the Jews have no relation whatsoever to the Exodus led by Moses.

Second: Every new religion, from a symbolic perspective, represents a kind of migration or spiritual separation from an old world or epoch whose values, beliefs and ideas can no longer be tolerated. However, at the same time, the

newly sought-after world can be attained only after reliving said migration in the shape of a continuous ritualistic exercise, recurring on a yearly basis. This, in our view, is the essence of the first Israelite pilgrimage led by Moses, which became known as "The Exodus". This understanding also explains the context of the passage in the Qur'ān which recounts Moses' "Night Journey" with his people[*]. The Exodus can therefore be thought of as being the Biblical version thereof, by means of which the Israelites were meant to transcend – in a spiritual sense – into a new epoch. Consequently, these stories and legends of migrations which feature in religious codices and traditions are not necessarily historical events that can be backed by archeological evidence.

Based on these observations, an impartial and objective reading of the Torah scripture, free of any orientalist impressions regarding the Exodus, not only confirms that the event in question did not occur in Egypt, but also assures us that it was indeed the account of a symbolic, ritualistic migration, driven by a spiritual purpose. This understanding will help us dismantle the enigma of the Biblical narrative.

This book strongly argues the issue of the Israelites' alleged mass departure from Egypt to a "Promised Land" in ancient Palestine, and aims to present irrevocable proof that the context of the story has been the subject of deliberate manipulation. Moses and his people never became lost in a desert, nor were they, at any point in time, slaves who labored in the construction of the Egyptian pyramids, as common belief holds.

Many Muslims will, in turn, contend that these ideas are in conflict with the Qur'ān, which explicitly mentions the name *Sinai*. We have been hearing and reading this rhetoric in repeated discussions by clergymen and laymen alike, and it has been echoed even by college professors in the history departments. Our response has been, and will always be, that the Qur'ān does not mention the name *Sinai* in the context of a mass Israelite migration. The name occurs in a different passage altogether, completely unrelated to the Exodus (or Night Journey), namely the following:

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[*] Qur'ān [26: 52 – 67].

{And We sent down from the sky water in due measure, then We let it reside in the land, and We are capable of taking it away * So We brought forth for you gardens of palm trees and grapes, for which you will find many fruits and from it you will eat * And a tree which emerges from the **Mount of Sīnā'**, it grows oil and is a relish for those who eat}…**[23: 18 – 20].**

The above passage has no relation to an Israelite migration of any kind, nor does it even bear mention of Moses. Everything that has been asserted in this regard by the classical commentators is a delusion which stems from misleading interpretations of the text, whereby *Sīnā'* was confused with *Sīnīn.* This mix-up has resulted in both names being used interchangeably, as designative of the same geographical landmark or site. We would invite readers at this point to refer to the chapters of the Qur'ān in question, to confirm what we are saying. It will immediately become evident that the text speaks of Sīnīn in a completely different context:

{By the fig and the olive * And the **mount of Sīnīn** * And this secure land * We have created man in the best form * Then We reverted him to the lowest of the low * Except those who have believed and done good works, they will have a reward that will not end}…**[95: 1 – 6].**

We will eventually elaborate on the implications of this mix-up. For now, we can assert that the Biblical account of Exodus does not refer to the Sinai Peninsula known today, in any way, shape or form. On the other hand, it is futile to insist that the *Sīnīn* of the Qur'ān is synonymous with *Sīnā',* as the passage in question features a declaration under oath (a vow), which mentions a geographic landmark of special sacredness, in the same context as fig and olive trees. This place has no relation to Egypt whatsoever, nor is its name designative of a barren wilderness, devoid of water and vegetation.

The premise of this book is therefore based on the following fundamental idea:

What is commonly referred to as the "Exodus from Egypt" is, in reality, congruent with Moses' "Night Journey", narrated in the Qur'ān. It is a religious fable relating a spiritual event, and not necessarily an actual, historical account. Its purpose is to describe the circumstances surrounding the first pilgrimage, whose doctrine was established by the early generations of the Israelites, and to

portray the conditions of misery, hunger, thirst and fear encountered by the believers who walked its perilous road.

Moreover, the "Land of Canaan", which the Lord had promised to the Children of Israel, was geographically part of the kingdom of Maʿīn – sedentary peoples whose domain encompassed large expanses of what is today the Jawf region of northern and central Yemen. These people (the Minaeans) wrote their religious texts in a dialect known as *Shft Knʿn* (שפת כנען), which the Torah confirms was also the dialect spoken by the Israelites themselves. What this means, essentially, is that the so-called "Hebrew Language" was actually a religious vernacular belonging to the family of ancient South Arabian dialects, and eventually became the designated language for devotional writings and prayers etched on the walls of temples.

Tracing the Torah back to its roots in the culture and civilization of ancient Yemen will allow us to highlight its narrative context more accurately. During this era, when Moses failed to enter the Promised Land, the Minaeans were already the rulers of a mighty kingdom in South Arabia, whose name appears in numerous Musnad inscriptions as *Maʿīn Miṣrn*. Eventually, their domain expanded from the Jawf to include the Red Sea coastal areas, and they exerted massive influence on the political and economic stage of the ancient world. The Israelites were, at the time, a small group of livestock herders and religious fanatics who did not have any place among the powerful tribes of the region.

Approximately 400 years later (by 850 BC), an alliance of rebellious clans, from their capital at Maʾrib, was able to challenge the dominance of Maʿīn and, after much bloodshed, overthrew its rule of Yemen. Consequently, they set the stage for the establishment of a federal and progressive kingdom in South Arabia, and began to exert their control over the region by means of brute force. This new, emerging power became known as *Sabaʾ* (Sheba), and its name also features in a number of passages of the Old Testament.

It was in that epoch (early Sabaic) that the Makāribah of Yemen appeared on the scene, and the name of their central deity, *al-Maqah*, rose to prominence as an alternative to the Canaanite god *Wadd*, the patron deity of the Minaeans, who had symbolized the divine "Father and Son" duality. This duality was represented in the legends of Abraham and Isaac, Abraham and Ishmael, David

and Solomon, etc... In fact, there is a myriad of patterns which confirms the existence of "Father – Son" worship as being the ancestral creed in Yemen.

In other words, these dignified – albeit not necessarily historical – personages constituted the embodiment of a widespread Arabian religious doctrine founded upon the Father – Son duality. Just as the Muslims venerate the tales of Ishmael's heroism and his role in the construction of the *Ka'bah* (i.e. the "Sacred Place", or *Miqdash*), the Jews likewise revere King David, and their generations narrated the stories of his epic deeds and his construction of the House of the Lord. In that same vein, the Muslim belief that Ishmael completed the endeavor which his father Abraham had begun echoed the Jewish view of Solomon being heir to David's legacy.

A critical analysis of Islamic creed regarding the Ka'bah as having been a sanctuary in Heaven that subsequently descended to Earth and landed at the present site of Makkah, will reveal such a doctrine as being no more than a continuation of ancient narrative traditions not founded upon historic facts. Just as the Ka'bah of the Ḥijāz never descended from Heaven, current-day Jerusalem likewise was never more than a humble hamlet occupying a coastal plain[*]. Both places were ordinary houses of worship, whose stature was inflated for purely religious and political motives.

Starting from this era (850 – 650 BC), which witnessed the rise of the Makāribah[**] of the North and the South, and the decline of the tribes of the Jawf region and Ḥaḍramawt, small tribal fiefdoms called *makhālīf* (plural of *mikhlāf*) began appearing in Yemen, as an expression of the redistribution of the central authority among different groups. Consequently, each tribe (or alliance of tribes) created its own mikhlāf as an autonomous domain, albeit without interfering with the authority of the Makrib.

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[*] No physical evidence has ever been presented to support the notion that the current-day cities of Makkah and Jerusalem existed during the era of Abraham (circa 1700 BC). The fictitious "holiness" acquired by Makkah was most probably the result of Umayyad – and later 'Abbasid – fabrications. As for Jerusalem, its status was not firmly established until the early Roman era.

[**] The term *Makāribah* (plural of *Makrib*) was a title borne by the tribal chiefs of ancient Yemen, who were kings and priests at the same time. The word is derived from the root *k-r-b* (or *q-r-b*), which means "close / brought close to the divinity". In a sense, the "Makribs" were looked upon as being intermediaries between man and deity. In our view, this expression may very well be the origin of the Hebrew term *karubim* (כרבים).

It can thus be said that during this epoch, "Mikhlāf Isrā'īl" (Biblical Israel) emerged as one of many tribal domains numbering no less than eighty. This particular domain was distinguished as being a small, religious kingdom, in many ways similar to the Vatican, which took the holy city of *Ur-Shlm* as its capital. It was also the period during which the priests collected the Torah scripture, reclassifying and rearranging its texts – whether through addition, omission, or modification of passages – based on older traditions, both oral and written. This undertaking on the part of the scribes no doubt resulted in the regular and systematic aggrandizement of the narrative of events, and involved the exaggeration of the status of certain personages, or even the outright fabrication of others, most notably Solomon and David, who were most probably symbolic expressions of a religious idea adapted from the doctrine of the Father – Son duality.

With the spread of the Judaic faith after the decline of the Mosaic Law, as a result of the break-up of Israel into two domains, the priests concocted a narrative of mythological proportions, by means of which the exploits of the two warring factions (Israel and Judea) were exaggerated in a manner that surpasses all imagination. Consequently, the history of Saba' (Sheba) was effectively hijacked, whereby its battles against the Minaeans were appropriated and ascribed to the Israelites, and whereby the military conquests of the great King-Priest of Saba', Karb-Īl Watr (650 BC) became the basis upon which the achievements of Saul and David were modeled.

If the theater of these religious events, as well as the circumstances which accompanied the ritualistic migration of the ancient Israelites, were intimately related to the historical and cultural background of Yemen, the geographical data and evidence would, in that case, constitute a subject that transcends and surpasses the issue of mere similarities in the names of places and landmarks. We can hardly find the slightest excuse to neglect this vital aspect. Consequently, we will once again remind the reader that what we are aiming for in this book is to place the Torah in its correct historical and cultural environment, and to sever any and all alleged links between the Old Testament scripture and Palestine.

The image of Moses ascending to the peak of Mount 'Abrim (עברים), where he died by the order of the Lord, must be viewed from the perspective of

a religious event, recorded by the scribes of a relatively late period, as symbolic of the demise of the Mosaic Law. In all certainty, this law was not actually "Jewish", but an old, monotheistic doctrine associated with the idea of the incarnation of a Savior, and his rise to lead his people to salvation. As for Judaism, it did not crystalize as a doctrine until several centuries later, its name having been attributed to the great tribe of Judah. As such, with the symbolic death of Moses on the mountain, the religious authority passed directly into the hands of the priests (*kahnim*), who would later establish Judaism as a creed loosely based on the principles of the Mosaic Law.

The deep contemplation into the slaughter of bulls, which features in Exodus, and the comparison thereof with the rituals of sacrificing livestock in deep valleys and canyons – rather than upon mountaintops or within hallowed temples – which were rampant during the early epoch of the Makribs, gives us the impression that the Biblical account simulated older paganistic traditions commonly practiced in Yemen. In this historical context, the long phase of the Israelites' pastoral life, characterized by its rites and rituals revolving around the worship of a single deity, was merged with older, heathen customs. This perfectly conveys to us the meaning of the Biblical and Qurānic story of the "Calf of Sin", wherein the Samaritan succeeded in subverting the Mosaic doctrine and re-introducing the tradition of venerating the bull deity.

There is nothing in written history to support the existence of a great Israelite kingdom extending from the Euphrates to the Nile. Nor is there any record of an exodus from Egypt, led by Moses. Furthermore, David, Solomon and Saul were never historical figures. The Jewish scribes, during the age of the collapse of the Minaean kingdom (Miṣrim) after its defeat by the Makribs of Saba', fabricated a mythological narrative wherein all the achievements of the Sabaic war generals were attributed to Israelite tribal chiefs, for purely religious purposes. At a later time, the Jewish priests of Yemen developed this narrative further, adding over thirty books containing legendary deeds ascribed to prophets and kings whose names are virtually unknown in recorded history, and who were originally Sabaic kings or priests remodeled as Israelite monarchs.

An imaginary Israel was born from the womb of an imagined Palestine, long thought to be the Jewish "Promised Land". This has led to the distortion of Palestine's image in the orientalist consciousness. For more than a century,

armies of archaeologists, writers, and scholars have contributed to the development and propagation of this false image, and marketed it to the masses as real history.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM OF SINAI

Was there truly a mass departure of Israelites from Egypt, as Bible scholars assert? If so, when did such an event take place? Did the Children of Israel reside in the Nile Country for a period of over four centuries, before their persecution by the "Pharaoh" of that land? If this is indeed true, then why are the Egyptians records completely silent on the issue? How can we believe that the Hieroglyphic texts pertaining to the era in question – chronicles that are known to have archived every minute facet and detail of Egyptian life, down to the mundane buying and selling of daily commodities by its citizens – would omit, without justification, a rebellion of some two million slaves led by Moses, the subsequent escape of such a mass of people, and the eventual drowning of an Egyptian monarch in the Sea of Reeds? Moreover, did the renegade slaves wander for forty years in the barren wastes of Sinai? Was Shlomo Sand not justified when he posed such valid questions?[2]

It might come as a shock to the reader that the Old Testament does not in fact speak of the Sinai Peninsula, nor does it confer that the Israelite slaves, who fled from the wrath of "Pharaoh", became hopelessly lost in a desert. This widespread belief was no doubt the result of a misrepresentation of the Biblical scripture, which stems from a false interpretation of the names in question, as they feature in the original Hebrew text.

If, for argument's sake, we are to concede that the event indeed took place where it is commonly thought, then how is it possible that the scribes who recorded the texts of Exodus and Numbers would cite places and landmarks which the exiled (or liberated) community came upon, in a manner that would make them impossible to access within the known geography of Egypt?

What is truly astonishing is that the Torah recounts ten plagues that befell Egypt, among which were ravaging swarms of locusts, an outbreak of frogs, and rivers turning to blood. Why would the Egyptian records completely disregard disasters of such magnitude? Does this not raise a warning buzzard?

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2) Shlomo Sand (born 1946), Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Tel Aviv, raises the puzzling issue of the Exodus in his scholarly books *The Invention of the Jewish People* (published in 2009 and translated by Yael Lotan) and its sequel, *The Invention of the Land of Israel: From Holy Land to Homeland* (published in 2012 and translated by Geremy Forman). In these works, Sand demolishes the myths and taboos that have surrounded Jewish and Israeli history, and deconstructs the age-old legends surrounding Palestine and the prejudices that continue to suffocate it.

There has been a tragic misrepresentation of the name *Miṣrim* (מצרים), which occurs well over six hundred times in the Old Testament scripture. This in turn has led to a rampant misunderstanding of the entire story, for many generations. Being that the Torah never actually states that the Exodus was towards the Sinai Peninsula in particular, but rather to a series of places whose names feature in contradictory versions, we will devote an entire chapter to retrace the path of this legendary journey.

We will begin with a briefing on the term "Sinai", as it appears in the mainstream English and Arabic translations of the Biblical texts, and compare it to the corresponding name in the Hebrew scripture. We will then attempt to retranslate the name in a manner that casts light on the manipulation, in order to clear-up the confusion caused by the classical commentators. Only by comparing the different versions of the name, as they feature in several books of the Old Testament scripture, can we identify the exact nature of the problem confronting us.

The name which corresponds to "Sinai" appears several times in the Book of Numbers, and in various forms. Here follows are some examples, in the order of their occurrence:

Yhwh spoke to Moses in the tent of meeting in the wilderness **of Sini,** on the first day of the second month of the second year after they came out of **Miṣrim.** He said... (Numbers 1:1).

The representation of the Hebrew *Sini* (סיני) as "Sinai", in both the English and Arabic translations of the Bible, is inaccurate, to say the least. The original name is written with the *Samekh* letter (ס), which is technically a combination of three consonant sounds: *z*, *s*, and *ṣ*. Had the scribes intended it to be vocalized as *Sina*, they would have recorded it using the *s* letter (שׁ). Furthermore, the Hebrew phrase *b-mbdr Sini* (במדבר סיני) designates the place as a wilderness, not a barren desert. Being that the *Samekh* letter is not vocalized in Arabic[*], and is instead represented by the letter *ṣ* (*Ṣād*), the name should have been rendered as *Ṣīnī* in the Arabic translations of the Bible.

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[*] It is worth noting that the ancient Sabaic alphabet of South Arabia also contains the *Samekh* letter. In the Musnad inscriptions of Yemen, the letter is represented by this glyph: ⵝ

Here is another occurrence of the name:

This is the account of the family of Aaron and Moses at the time Yhwh spoke to Moses on **Mount Sini** (Numbers 3:1).

In the above verse, the name appears in the feminized form of *Sinh,* which corresponds to *Sīnah,* in Arabic. We have already mentioned that the tendency to feminize place names was very common in ancient Yemeni dialectic traditions. More so, we have, in this instance, a clear designation of Sīnah as being a mountain – the Hebrew term for which is *har* (הר) – whereas in the previous verse, it was described as a wilderness.

Traces of this name can still be found today in the ʿUdayn directorate of the Ibb province of Yemen, in a mountain village called *Ṣan*[3]. The site lies on the pilgrimage road to another sacred place, that being Mount Qadas, which is located in the Taʿiz province.

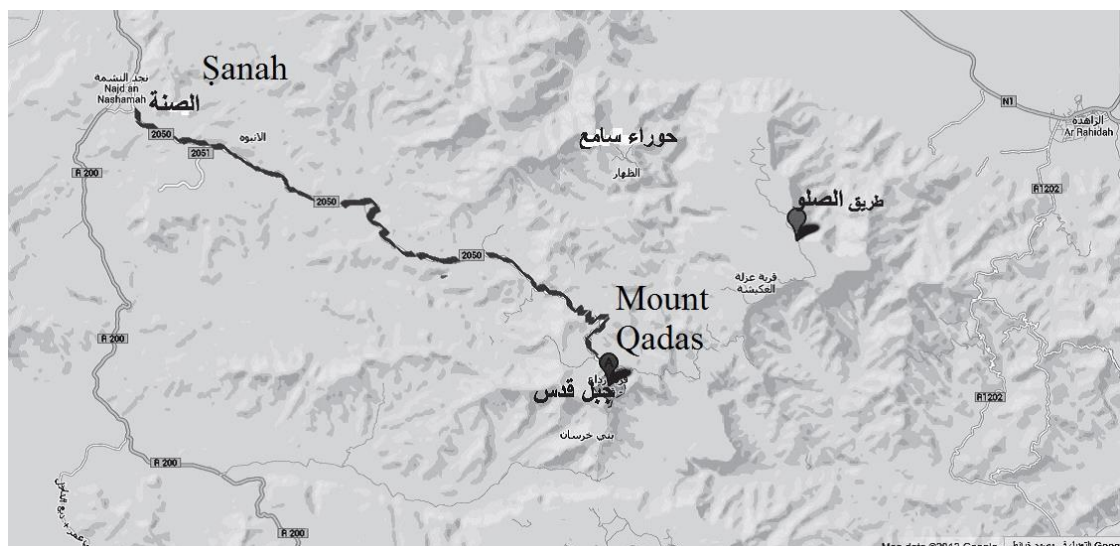Here is yet another version of the name:

And the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of **Ṣan** in the first month: and the people abode in **Qadash**; and Miriam died there, and was buried there (Numbers 20:1).

The first highlighted name, as it appears in the Hebrew scripture, is actually *Ṣn* (צִן)[*]. Once again, the site in question is being described as a wilderness where Miriam was buried. This is very obviously not the same *Sini – Sinah* we encountered earlier. Furthermore, Qadesh cannot possibly be synonymous with Jerusalem (*al-Quds*, in Arabic), as that name was not used to designate the city until a much later era. In fact, we have records from the early Islamic period (around 610 AD) confirming that the city of Jerusalem was known as *Īlyā'* to the Arabs of that time. It is more than likely that the name *al-Quds* was first used to refer to Jerusalem during the Umayyad Era, and it was most probably an abbreviation of *Bayt al-Maqdis* (Hebrew transliteration: *Beth h-Mqdsh*). At any rate, neither Ṣn, Sinah, nor Sini can be found anywhere within the vicinity of present-day Jerusalem.

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3) See: Arabic Wikipedia (صن (العدين

* Note how the name is spelled with the *Tsadey* letter.

On the other hand, we can indeed spot Mount Ṣanah on the pilgrimage road to Qadas – exactly as described in the Torah – if we head westward from the Ibb province to Taʻiz, in Yemen (see the map below). Even today, Yemenis still regard Qadas as a sanctified mountain, and they often chant religious hymns in its honor, while partaking in their well-known group folk dance called *Raqsat al-Burʻ*. Mount Qadas lies in the southwestern part of Taʻiz, about 80 kilometers from the city of ʻAdan (Aden). In recent years, over twenty archeological sites were discovered in the vicinity of Qadas, many of which are mentioned by name in the Musnad inscriptions commemorating the exploits of the great king-priest of Sabaʼ, Karb-Īl Watr, in the 7th Century BC (around the same period when the Old Testament scripture was first recorded).

Map 1: The road from Ṣanah to Qadas
(Source: Google Maps)

Here follows is yet another incidence worth pondering over:

And they journeyed from **Aylm**, and encamped by **Yam Suph**. And they journeyed from Yam Suph, and encamped in the wilderness of **Sīn** (Numbers 33: 10, 11).

Besides the incessant rhetoric asserting that Sin (סין) is synonymous with the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt, one of the most atrocious errors encountered in the mainstream English translations of the above passage is the rendering of the name *Yam Suph* (ים סוף) as the "Red Sea". Actually, the Hebrew word *yam*

does not necessarily designate a sea, but is a more general expression which could very well be construed as indicating a large water basin or river valley. This is actually true in many other ancient dialects, including Syriac and Arabic. The same term appears in the Qur'ān to describe three different bodies of water: the *yam* in which Moses was placed by his mother when he was an infant; the *yam* into which an enraged Moses hurled the golden calf of the Samaritan; and the *yam* in which Pharaoh and his henchmen drowned. The context of the passages relating these events clearly indicates that the text is describing a flowing river or inland water basin, and most certainly not a large sea separating two continents. It would make far more sense for a group of pilgrims travelling the wilderness to camp by a fresh water basin, than along a sea coast.

At any rate, the site of Sin (or, more accurately, *Syn*) where the Israelites camped after their departure from Yam Suph, cannot be matched with the territory of the Sinai Peninsula we know today[*]. Conversely, it can be easily located within the Ibb – Ta'iz region of Yemen, where the directorate of al-Sayāni[4] lies in the vicinity of the isolated mountain sanctuary of al-Sayf. In fact, it is quite possible for a traveler to follow the route from al-Sayf (in Ibb)[5] to Mount Ṣanah, and find himself on the same trajectory as Mount Qadas, in Ta'iz.

As for the Biblical site of Aylm, which lay along the Israelites' route to Yam Suph, we can locate it today within the Ḥazm al-'Udayn directorate of the Ibb province, precisely in the small hamlet of Bi'r al-Līmah. As the Arabic term *Bi'r* indicates, it originally designated a water well (or spring), after which al-Līmah[6] was named. Interestingly, both al-Līmah and al-Sayānī (Aylm and Sin) also appear in the following passage:

And they journeyed from Aylm, and the whole assembly of the Children of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Aylm and Sini, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Miṣrim" (Exodus 16:1).

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4) See: https://www.geonames.org/6940640/as-sayyani.html

5) See: Arabic Wikipedia (إب) عزلة السيف

6) See: Arabic Wikipedia (حزم العدين) بير الليمة

[*] It should be noted that at the presumed time of the Exodus (1300 – 1200 BC), the Sinai Peninsula was fully under Egyptian control, once again testifying to the absurdity of the claim that the Israelites could have sought refuge there – let alone wandered aimlessly for 40 years – after having fled from the Nile Delta region.

In the above passage, a clear distinction is made between Sin – Syn (סין) and Sini – Syni (סיני), neither of which can be identified with any site in Egypt.

What we have demonstrated here is but an example, for the purpose of illustration. In the coming chapters, we will analyze these Biblical texts in more detail. For now, we can summarize these observations to our non-specialist readers, in order to paint a more accurate picture of the road traversed by the Israelite pilgrims.

First: The Torah does not bear any mention of the Sinai Peninsula we know today, whatsoever. What the text does refer to are at least three distinct locations, whose names feature in the following forms:

➢ Sin – Syn (סין)
➢ Sini – Syni (סיני)
➢ Ṣan – Ṣin (צן)

Second: The geographical descriptions of the above sites actually differ, which confirms that the original Hebrew text speaks of distinct locations, none of which bears any resemblance to Sinai, Egypt.

The question remains: where can we find these places?

According to the Book of Exodus, Moses lived for a time close to the residence of his father-in-law Jethro – Yethro, who was the high-priest of the city of Madian (מדין). The name *Yathru* is thought to originate from Mandaeanism, where its equivalent would be *Ethri,* which in English corresponds to "ethereal" (meaning "holy" or "pure", in a sense). The Arabic version of this name, as it appears in the classical sources, is *Yathrūn*[*].

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[*] The perusal of the name *Yathrūn* will reveal part of the enigmatic history of the evolution of ancient Arabian languages, especially the dialects of Yemen. The *–n* suffix in *Yathrūn* is a hallmark of one such vernacular, where it is known by linguists as *al-Nūn al-Kilā'iyyah*, pertaining to Mikhlāf al-Kilā' (formerly part of Saba'). The residents of this particular corner of Yemen were famous throughout history for appending this suffix to their names. To illustrate, we can state a few examples: 'Arb – 'Arbn, 'Adn – 'Adnn, Miṣr – Miṣrn, Ṣan'ā' – Ṣan'n; hence Yathrū – Yathrn (Yethrūn). The Bible is unique among ancient religious texts with regards to the use of this suffix, which further assures us that Hebrew was originally an offshoot of one of the old dialects of Yemen; a dialect that was reserved by tribal customs for religious writings. Hebrew was not in fact a common language used in everyday communication. As such, the priests who penned the texts of the Torah recorded many proper nouns exactly as they vocalized them; hence *Jethro* was rendered as *Jethron.*

On the other hand, Moses was the son of ʿAmrm (עמרם), whose name in Arabic is *ʿAmrān,* and could also designate a particular locale, or even a tribe. Thus, the title "Son of ʿAmrān" could be a reference to that period in Mose's life when he resided there, and tended to the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro – Jethron. This understanding of the term's significance can help us crack the puzzle of Moses' relation to Miriam, in both the Biblical and Qurʾānic versions of the story. Miriam, who is also designated as "Daughter of ʿAmrān", is said to have been the sister of Aaron (Hārūn), who in turn is the brother of Moses; although Miriam herself was not sister to the latter. This could be construed as meaning that Miriam and Moses both traced their origin to a particular place (or tribe) called *ʿAmrm – ʿAmrān.*

It would do well for the reader to note that *ʿAmrān* is the name of a very old South Arabian deity, who was one of the legendary "Founding Fathers" of Yemen. This deity has left his name in several sites within that country, foremost among which is the province of ʿAmrān[*].

And Moses tended the flock of **Yathru** his father-in-law, the priest of Madian. And he led the flock behind the wilderness, and came to the mountain of God – **Ḥarib** (Exodus 3:1).

The above description cannot be reconciled with the arid geography of the Sinai Peninsula, nor does it have any relation to Egyptian culture. So, where exactly did the erroneous understanding occur?

In our opinion, the essence of the confusion pertaining to the story of the Exodus, and the misunderstanding of its symbolic and religious connotations, lie not in the account of the events per se, but in the very name *Miṣrim* itself. This name has always been misread as being synonymous with Egypt, which is quite simply false, as we showed in previous publications, and as we will continue to demonstrate throughout this volume. As a consequence of this error, an arbitrary link between Egypt and the events recounted in Exodus has been firmly entrenched in the consciousness of the generations.

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[*] See for instance: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%27Amran_Governorate

This unjustified overlap can be traced back to multi-layered manipulations which characterize the mainstream account. It is also certain that clergymen, journalists, scholars, and even archeologists of the classical schools, from different eras and religious backgrounds, have contributed to this worldwide delusion. The fact remains, however, that there is no evidence to support such a link between the events in question and their presumed theater, as the official stance holds.

It is generally accepted that the Exodus occurred sometime around 1300 BC. During that age, Egypt was not referred to as *Miṣr* in any historical document or archeological inscription that we are aware of. The official name of the country was *Kemet – Khemet* (which means "Black Land" – a testament to the fertile soil of the Nile basin). The term *Miṣr – Miṣrim* did not appear until well after 700 BC, while *Aegyptus* is most probably a Greek corruption of *Koptos*, the name given to a particular region east of the Nile. As such, there is a gap of at least 600 years between the period of the Exodus and the appearance of the name that was associated to its theater. How can that be? Could there be another *Miṣr* from which the Children of Israel had fled? If so, when did such an event actually take place?

In this chapter, we will attempt to reach a comprehensive perception of the Exodus, and provide the reader with the opportunity to reflect on the event, as well as the geographical locations described in the Torah.

We will address the aspects of the Exodus by raising five detailed points.

The Other Miṣrim and its Untold History

As we have just pointed out, Egypt was not known by the name *Miṣr – Miṣrim* during the time when the Exodus is thought to have occurred. What this means, essentially, is that if we place the event in the theater presumed by mainstream academia, we would have to concede that the Exodus happened after 700 BC. Consequently, we would have to rearrange the epochs of the region's monarchs, as well as the wars which they fought, in order to accommodate the event into Egyptian history. This endeavor would be nothing short of absurd, as it would plunge us into a spiral of chronological chaos. For instance, King Solomon, who

supposedly lived around 900 BC, would have predated the period of Israelite bondage and subsequent escape from the "Pharaoh of Egypt" by some two centuries. Likewise, the Assyrian – and later Babylonian – campaigns against Israel and Judah will have ended just before the dissolution of the unified kingdom, while the period of exile would have to be placed closer to Moses' time. Such chaos would render the entire history of the ancient world nonsensical.

To resolve this confusion in the chronology of events, we must accept the notion that the Exodus is not a historical event, and most certainly did not take place in Egypt. It was an allegorical account – a legend originally told by a particular religious, semi-nomadic tribe, embellished and aggrandized for the purpose of spiritual teaching. However, this does not contradict with the assertion that the geography of the legend is in fact very real, and can indeed be determined. However, before we can do that, we first need to identify the general framework of the story's setting, by addressing the following questions:

What was the ancient world like during the presumed era when the event occurred? What were its most prominent kingdoms and states; the major players who shaped its history?

It is universally accepted that the Assyrian and Egyptian empires were the two main powers of the ancient Middle-East, having achieved their dominion over the region for successive eras, until the fall of Babylon in 539 BC, which heralded a new age. What the general public is unaware of, due to the manipulation of the region's history, is that South Arabia was also a mighty kingdom at the presumed time of the Exodus, its influence reaching as far north as the Ṭā'if area, in the central part of what is today Saudi Arabia. This can be verified by consulting the maps of the ancient Greeks, notably Ptolemy, notwithstanding that they were from a relatively late period.

The tribes of Yemen had enough power, influence and wealth in the ancient world, due to their control of the trade routes. In fact, the most powerful kingdom in Arabia at the time, and whose mention is prevalent in the Musnad inscriptions unearthed throughout the Peninsula, was Maʿīn Miṣrn (Miṣrim), a kingdom originally established in the Jawf region, by tribes who are thought to be the descendants of the ancient nation of Thamūd.

What is truly surprising is that certain particular Minaean kings traced their ancestry to the clan of *al-Farʿah*. This name appears numerous times in the Old Testament scripture, and in the exact same form (פרעה), where it was interpreted to mean the "Pharaoh of Egypt". This is despite the fact that there is absolutely no evidence in any physical record to suggest that the rulers of Egypt ever designated themselves by that name or title. On the contrary, all evidence suggests that they were simply "Kings" and "Queens".

The kingdom of Maʿīn Miṣrn was able to impose its influence on the international trade routes which ran across the Arabian mainland, by means of camel caravans. One particularly famous Minaean tribe who were pioneers in this regard was the tribe of *Amīr*; yet another name which features in the Old Testament (interpreted as *Immer – Emmer* in the English translations). Amīr bore the title of "Camel Lords of Arabia", during that era. Later on, the Minaeans transitioned into trade by sea, after having established their control over the harbors of al-Ḥudaydah and Mīdī, two cities which still exist today, in the western coastal provinces of Yemen.

More particularly, The Minaeans were able to control the trade of frankincense, myrrh, agricultural products, iron weapons and armor, as well as textiles – or what was commonly referred to by the ancient Arabs as *Nasj Dāwūd* (literally, the "Fabric of David") – a characterization that was intended to describe the general industries famous in South Arabia. Incidentally, David never reigned over any part of the Levant, but was a legendary figure from Yemen's ancient past. It was by means of a systematic manipulation of history that he was made king of Israel in Palestine, without a shred of evidence.

This great kingdom prospered until the 7th Century BC (about 200 years before the final defeat of Babylon by the Persians), when it finally fell after a series of destructive wars waged upon it by Karb-Īl Watr, the last of the great Makribs of Saba' (Sheba). This fact can be verified upon analyzing the Musnad (South Arabian) inscription known as the "Victory Stele", (designated as "RES 3945"). This valuable relic details the military exploits of Karb-Īl, including his recapture of the city of *Fadah – Fadat* from the Minaeans (who are none other than the Canaanites of the Torah, as we will soon see), after a great battle during which he seized their fortifications on the slopes of Mount Ḍahr. The inscription tells us that Karb ultimately achieved control over large parts of Yemen.

What is worth noting in this regard is that there is no mention of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in the victory engraving of Karb-Īl. Does this mean that it was established before the era of the Sabaic Makribs* (i.e. before 850 BC)? Or did it rise after their downfall? In either case, written history does not tell us anything about the existence of such a kingdom.

Photo 2: Fragment of Musnad Inscription "RES 3945"
(Source: Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions)

If we assume, as per the prevailing orientalist view, that a once mighty Israelite domain existed over the territory of Palestine, and that its influence spread to cover the entire Levant (what is today Syria, Lebanon and Jordan) and even parts of Iraq, before a schism during the reign of Rehoboam resulted in the kingdom dividing into two states, we will then find ourselves facing some puzzling dilemmas: when exactly did such a kingdom exist? During which reign did Rehoboam's father, Solomon, reign? Why is there no mention of such a vast dominion in the records of the Assyrian Empire? Why was it overlooked by the Egyptian archives?

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* At the start of his reign, Karb-Īl bore the title of "Makrib" (which was essentially a combination of king and priest), but afterwards relinquished it in favor of simply "King" *(Malik).* He is mentioned around 685 BC, in a Mesopotamian inscription dedicated to King Sennacherib, where he features as *Karibi-Ilu,* and where he is said to have offered gifts to appease the Assyrian monarch. There has been some disagreement among scholars regarding the true period of Karb's reign. Some have placed him as a relatively late figure who ruled towards the end of the 5th Century BC (450 – 410 BC), while others are certain that he ruled large parts of Yemen during the 7th Century BC. In our view, Karb-Īl Watr was indeed a contemporary of the Assyrian monarch Sennacherib, and his reign coincided with the fall of the kingdom of Maʿīn Miṣrn.

Miṣr in the Qur'ān

What is the origin of the famous adage "Miṣr al-Kinānah" often reiterated by Arabs? What relation could Egypt have had with the famous tribe of Banū Kinānah? Some linguists have ventured that the term *kinānah* refers to the quiver from which the hunters of old drew their arrows, hence the maxim "Egypt of the Quiver". Upon closer scrutiny, this explanation does not seem logical, as it is more befitting of a primitive, tribal culture that relied on hunting and gathering for survival, and not the large state governed by a central authority that Egypt was. The inhabitants of ancient Egypt were agrarian, and not famous for being hunters, in that sense.

The truth of the matter is that the significance of this old adage, which is deeply rooted in Arabian culture, can be understood only by linking the term *Kinānah*, which is in fact a proper noun, to the *Miṣr – Miṣrn* of Yemen. By virtue of its expansion towards the coast, the kingdom of Ma'īn was able to control the trade routes over the Red Sea. Being that this particular region was called "The Coast of Banī Kinānah", even as late as the time of the great Yemeni scholar al-Hamadāni*, the implication of the motto "Miṣr al-Kinānah" quickly becomes apparent. It is an allusion to the bygone and forgotten Miṣr of South Arabia, which at one point encompassed the territories of the Banū Kinānah clans.

With regards to the victory stela of Karb-Īl Watr, if we take into account the distance between the Jawf region of Yemen (the original heartland of the Minaeans) and Mount Ḍahr, which is located in the Ta'iz province, we would then have to accept the reality that the kingdom of Ma'īn Miṣrn, at the height of its territorial expanse, did indeed control substantial parts of the Red Sea coast.

Let us now examine the name *Miṣr* in the Qur'an, which corresponds to *Miṣrim* in the Torah, to judge whether or not it is actually synonymous with Egypt.

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* Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan ibn Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb al-Hamadāni (893 – 947 AD) was a prominent Yemeni historian, geographer, and astronomer, known for penning the book *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-'Arab* (English: *Character of the Arabian Peninsula*), a veritable gazetteer of the tribes of his homeland, and by far his most important work. His other great endeavor is ***Kitāb al-Iklīl*** (Eng: *The Wreath* or *The Diadem*), a ten volume manuscript concerning the genealogies of the Ḥimyarites and the wars partaken by their kings. Al-Hamadāni's works have been the subject of extensive research and publications by Austrian orientalists, especially Eduard Glaser, who was a specialist on ancient Arabia. Throughout this research, we will often quote al-Hamadāni and rely on his testimonies, as we explore the true and long-forgotten origins of the Old Testament.

The first clue we can state in this regard lies in the Arabic term *far'ūn – far'wn* which in turn corresponds to *phar'h* (פרעה) in the Torah, and which has long been the subject of debate as to whether it is a name or a title.

The first thing that strikes our attention is that the Qur'ān never mentions *farā'īn* (Pharaohs) in the plural, but speaks explicitly of **one** particular person designated by that term, being **exclusively** the tyrant who persecuted Moses and the Israelites, and who boasted of his sovereignty over a place the Qur'ān identifies as *Miṣr*.

{And Far'ūn proclaimed among his people: "O my people, do I not possess the kingship of Miṣr, and these rivers that flow beneath me? Do you not see?"}…**[43:51].**

One of the great delusions of our time is that there were over a hundred *Pharaohs* who ruled the land designated as *Miṣr*, starting from King Narmer (3100 BC) and ending with Queen Cleopatra (30 BC). The reality that very few are aware of is that the Qur'ān completely denies this claim, and tells us very clearly that after Far'ūn and his henchmen drowned, the Israelites eventually inherited the kingship of Miṣr and the lands around it:

{So Far'ūn sent gatherers to the cities * "These are but a small band. * And they have done what has enraged us. * And we are all gathered and forewarned" * So, We evicted them out of gardens and springs * And treasures and an honorable station * **Thus, We made the Children of Israel inherit it**}…**[26:53-59].**

{Moses said to his people: "Seek help with God, and be patient; the land is for God, He will inherit it to whom He pleases of His servants; and the ending will be for the righteous" * They said: "We were being harmed before you came to us and since you have come to us". He said: **"Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy, and make you successors in the land, so He sees how you work?"**}…**[7:128,129].**

{And We let the people who were weak **inherit the east of the land and the west of it which We have blessed.** And the good word of your Lord was completed towards the **Children of Israel** for their patience; and We destroyed what Far'ūn and his people were doing, and what they had contrived}…**[7:137].**

The above passages state, in plain terms, that the Israelites eventually inherited everything that their enemies left behind. If the *Miṣr* of the Qur'ān is indeed Egypt, two serious questions arise:

1) How could there be an entire lineage of "Pharaohs" afterwards?
2) Where is the proof that the Israelites were ever rulers of Egypt at some point after 1250 BC (the presumed date of the Exodus)?

This is why, in the entire text of the Qur'ān, we do not come across any mention of Far'ūn (Pharaoh) either before or after Moses' time. This will quickly become evident upon reading the chapter of the Qur'ān that recounts the story of the Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph), and which states that the title of the ruler of Miṣr during Joseph's time was *al-malik* (the "king" or "supreme authority"), while his subordinate was given the title of *al-'azīz* (a local governor or deputy). There is no mention of "Pharaoh" anywhere in the account of Joseph, even though it is presumed that he lived, at most, two centuries before Moses' time.

Another major hint which supports our hypothesis that the events in question could not have taken place in Egypt lies in the account of Joseph's dream, wherein he saw seven fat cows being devoured by seven scrawny ones. Being that dreams are symbolic, the governor of Miṣr sought the aid of Joseph, who by that time was in prison. The Israelite went on to interpret the vision to the people as a warning that years of drought would eventually come. He told them to start storing grain for the next seven seasons, in order to prepare for the coming dearth. He declared that after the drought, rainfall would come, and the crops could be grown again. This can be deduced from the following passage:

{Then after that will come a year in which the people will have **rain** and they will be able to produce once again}...**[12:49].**

The conclusion drawn from Joseph's story is that the events it recounts took place in a land that depended on rain for agriculture. This is obviously the same country which Miṣr was a part of, and where Moses and the Israelites would later face persecution at the hands of Pharaoh. Evidence for this is encountered in another passage of the Qur'ān, which relates a discourse that took place between Moses and Pharaoh:
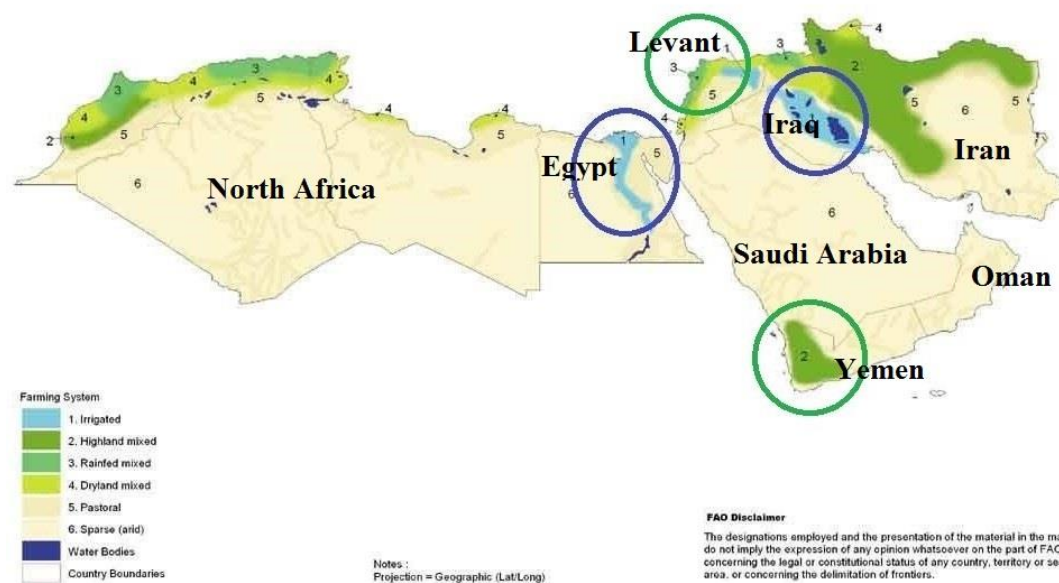
{He said: "So who is the lord of you both, O Moses?" * He said: "Our Lord is the One who gave everything its creation, then guided." * He said: "What then has happened to the previous nations?" * He said: "The knowledge of them is with my Lord, in a record. My Lord does not err or forget." * The One who made for you the earth habitable, and He traced out paths for you in it, **and He brought down water from the sky, so We brought out with it pairs of vegetation of all types**}...**[20:49 – 53].**

The above description does not fit with the climate of Egypt, because any first-year student of geography knows for a fact that Egypt has always depended on the flooding of the Nile for its agriculture, and on the eventual development of irrigation canal systems for that purpose. The Nile Valley receives, on average, no more than 30 millimeters of rainfall throughout the year. Egypt, like Mesopotamia, does not rely on rain for crop plantation. The Nile River, whose source is underground water basins and lakes in central Africa, has been, for thousands of years, the very lifeblood of Egypt. As long as the great river flows, the Egyptians could plant crops. Rain is irrelevant to their agriculture[*].

The map on the next page shows the various farming and agricultural systems in the MENA (Middle-East and North Africa) region. The reader should note how the territories of the Nile Valley and Mesopotamia are completely reliant on irrigation, as they receive very little rain throughout the year. On the other hand, the regions of South Arabia (Yemen) and the Levant (Syria and Lebanon), are reliant mostly on rainwater for the growing of crops.

On the other hand, the land of Miṣr, as described in the Qur'ān, is a mountainous country harboring grazing plateaus and rivers which could dry up after long periods of drought; a land whose inhabitants built wells to store rainwater. In fact, Joseph was found cast away in one such well, in the beginning of the story. This is a concept not popular in Egypt, where the Nile River flows all year long, and is not directly dependent on rain. The same can be said of Mesopotamia, where the Tigris and the Euphrates are permanently flowing waterways originating from subterranean sources.

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[*] Theodor Nöldeke (1836 – 1930 AD), a well-known German orientalist, scholar and Bible researcher, once criticized the Qur'ān, on account of it containing a glaring geographical inaccuracy concerning Egyptian agriculture. In his book *Geschichte des Qorâns* (Eng: *History of the Koran*), which was first published in 1860, Nöldeke concluded that the author of the text was ignorant of Egypt's geography and climatology, as demonstrated by his associating of good harvests and successful crops with rainfall. This rather abusive deduction could only have arisen from Nöldeke's pre-supposition that the *Miṣr* mentioned in the Qur'ān is synonymous with Egypt, which is simply not the case.

Map 2: Major farming systems in the MENA region
(Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – www.fao.org)

The name *M-ṣ-r-n* (articulated as *Miṣran*) features in several ancient, South Arabian inscriptions, where it clearly designates sedentary Minaean tribes. It is spelled as such in the Musnad characters (read from right to left): ┓ ⊃ 𐩥𐩺 ⊿

The Minaean kingdom originated in northern and central Yemen, in the region of *al-Jawf,* perhaps as far back as 1700 BC. It eventually expanded to encompass areas in southern Yemen, as well as the Red Sea coast of Tihāmah. It reached the height of its power around 850 – 800 BC.

Map 3: Geographical location of the Jawf region of Yemen

Where were the Israelites Before their Bondage in Miṣr?

According to the Torah, Jacob – whose name would become "Israel" – resided in the land of Canaan, before migrating to Miṣrim, when a great famine struck his original homeland:

Now Jacob saw that there was grain in **Miṣrim** and Jacob said to his sons: "Why do you look at one another?" He said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in **Miṣrim.** Go down there, and buy for us from there, so that we may live, and not die". Joseph`s ten brothers went down to buy grain from **Miṣrim**. But Jacob didn`t send Benjamin, Joseph`s brother, with his brothers; for he said: "Lest perhaps harm befall him". The sons of Israel came to buy among those who came, for the famine was in the land of **Canaan** (Genesis 42: 1 – 5).

What the scripture is telling us is that the children of Jacob sought refuge in Miṣrim, not Egypt. The Israelites therefore departed from the land of Canaan during the era of Jacob, and arrived at neighboring Miṣrim, where they would reside for over four centuries. This is confirmed in the following passage:

Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, who came into **Miṣrim**; every man and his household came with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zabulun, and Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. All the souls who came out of the Jacob`s body were seventy souls, and Joseph was in **Miṣrim** already. And Joseph died, as did all his brothers, and all that generation. The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and grew exceedingly mighty, and the land was filled with them (Exodus 1: 1 – 7).

And so it was that after famine struck their homeland, the larger tribes of Israel, led by Jacob himself, reached Miṣrim, to where Joseph had preceded them a number of years earlier (the story of the latter being sold in the markets of Miṣrim by a caravan of Ismaelites is well known).

The subsequent passages of the Torah also relate to us how the Israelites were forced into slave labor in Miṣrim:

Now there arose a new king over **Miṣrim,** who didn`t know Joseph. He said to his people, "Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it happen that when any war breaks out, they also join themselves to our enemies, and fight against us, and

escape out of the land". Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. They built storage cities for Pharaoh: **Phithum** and **Ra'mss** (Exodus 1: 8 – 11).

The translation of Miṣrim as "Egypt" in the above passage has led to widespread delusions having no basis in history, among which is the belief that the ancient Israelites built two cities to store grain, called *Phithom* and *Ra'mses*. We can say, with all certainty, that Egypt has never in its entire history known of any towns by such names, where silos for storing food commodities could be found.

In subsequent pages of this book, we will discuss the location of *Ra'm – Ra'ms* in Yemen, at length. For now, it will suffice to locate the village of Faythūm, which can be identified today by the mountain sanctuary of *Jabal Thūm,* within the Ibb province. The Biblical rendering of this name as *Phthm* (פתם) brings to mind the occurrence of the term *fūm* in the Qur'ān, which has long been the subject of debate. The prevailing view is that this word is synonymous with *thūm,* which is Arabic for "garlic". In fact, this rather strange term happens to feature only once in the scripture, and in the context of the story of the Israelites' departure from Miṣr, in particular.

{And you said: "O Moses, we will not be patient to one type of food, so call for us your Lord that He may bring forth what the earth grows of its beans, cucumbers, **garlic (*fūm*)**, lentils, and onions." He said: "Would you trade that which is lowly with that which is good?" Descend into **Miṣr**, you will have in it what you have asked for. And they were stricken with humiliation and disgrace, and they remained under the wrath of God for they were disbelieving in the revelations of God, and killing the prophets without right; this is for what they have disobeyed and transgressed}...**[2:62].**

It is quite obvious that the dialectical traditions (phonetics) of the majority of South Arabian tribes, even to this day and age, render the *th* sound (represented by *t̲*) as an *f* (or *ph*); hence *Thūm* becomes *Phūm.* It would also appear that this tradition in pronunciation is very old, and that the scribes who resided in that region preserved it by writing certain words exactly as they vocalized them. Occasionally, however, some terms – both common and proper nouns – would slip by and appear in their original form. Hence we can say that the Biblical

name *Phithum* could very well be an example of such phonetic traditions, whereby *Thūm* and *Phūm* were merged together to form *Phithūm.*

What is truly astonishing is that not only does Thūm still exist in the fertile mountain plateaus of Yemen[7], but that it lies in the same geographical space as another site, which bears a striking recollection of the Biblical Israelites, that being the town of al-Asbāṭ[8]. This latter name, translated into English, literally means "The Tribes". The singular form of the name in Arabic is *sabṭ,* which is exactly identical to its Hebrew counterpart *shbṭ – sbṭ* (שבט).

Does this fact not merit some reflection? Is the question of what the neighboring sites of Thūm – Phūm and al-Asbāṭ have in common not a valid one?

We would take this opportunity to once again remind our readers of the importance of seeing the actual ecological environment of the Torah, and not merely noting the similarities in the names of places or landmarks. What we are dealing with here is a complete organic unity between the theater of the Old Testament and the land of Yemen, at a cultural and spiritual level, the likes of which cannot be encountered anywhere in the world.

These ancient texts illustrate a very important issue, which explains one of the motives for the Israelite migration: the Children of Israel (Banū Isrāʾīl), during that particular era of their existence, were a group of cattle and sheep herders who − beyond the most rudimentary tenets of monotheism and reverence of Yhwh (Jehovah) − did not yet have a fully comprehensive tribal religion that they could call their own. The Minaeans of Miṣrim, on the other hand, were far more civilized, and devoted themselves to a national deity they called *Wadd.* Being sedentary people, they were naturally contemptuous of the Israelites, and looked upon them with a measure of disdain.

This social adversity recalls the ancient legends of the clashes between the nomadic and the sedentary tribes, which the Old Testament portrayed symbolically in the story of Cain and Abel. It is for this reason that the Minaeans became fearful of the increasing numbers of the Israelites, whom they felt were encroaching on their territories and procreating at an alarming rate.

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7) See: Arabic Wikipedia (جبل ثوم (الظهار)

8) https://satellites.pro/Al_Asbat_map and https://www.tripmondo.com/yemen/ibb/ash-sha-ir/al-asbat/

This issue is of utmost importance and must be taken into account, in order to truly understand the context of the Exodus, and to liberate it from the clutches of orientalist fantasy. Simply put, there was never a "Land of Canaan" in Palestine, as Biblical archeologists have been clamoring throughout over 70 years of excavations in the Levant; nor was there any escape by the Israelites from the "Pharaoh of Egypt".

Photo 3: Sunrise over al-Asbāṭ, Yemen
(Source: http://wikimapia.org/13229642/ar/)

Jashan in the Land of Miṣrim

The Children of Israel were originally a conglomeration of nomadic clans that lived in a generally infertile environment, even before the great famine struck their homeland. Moses himself was the shepherd of a priest of Madian, when he received Jehovah's call. He was most certainly not an Egyptian nobleman or officer, as surmised by Sigmund Freud[9]. What this means, essentially, is that the Exodus was not motivated only by a religious cause, but by other factors, foremost being the Israelites' inherently itinerant lifestyle, which imposed upon them the urgency to seek new sources of sustenance.

The motive to search for a fertile "Promised Land", where a more sedentary existence can be attained, is a core idea conveyed in the Torah as being the dream of all nomadic peoples. It is not a proprietary notion that concerns only a single and particular tribe. In other words, the yearning of the nomad for

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9) For reference, see: **Moses and Monotheism** – Freud – translated from German by Katherine Jones – first publication 1939.

his earthly paradise was not an aspect of life that was monopolized by the Israelites. Within that framework, we can understand how any such homogenous group would look forward to the emergence of a savior figure, who would liberate them from their state of purgatory and lead them on the spiritual path to meet their god and their destiny. It is for this purpose that the character of Moses was invented. In fact, the Hebrew term *mshh* (משה) – articulated as *Mosheh* – means "to draw out", or "to rescue", and can be thought of as the title given to a symbolic figure who represents an ideal.

The Book of Genesis paints an accurate picture of the circumstances surrounding the Children of Israel, during the era of Joseph. They were a rather small tribe of herdsmen who often migrated from one place to another[*]. When the great famine struck, they sought refuge in the lush territories of the sedentary Minaeans (the South Arabian tribes of Maʿīn). The question is: where exactly did the Israelites settle after they entered Miṣrim? The answer is found in the following passage:

Israel lived in the land of **Miṣrim**, in the land of **Gashan**; and they got themselves possessions therein, and were fruitful, and multiplied (Genesis 47:27).

The actual name rendered as *Goshen* (or, occasionally, *Gessen*) in the English versions of the Bible, appears as *Gshn* (גשן) in the original Hebrew text. In the Arabic translations, it features as *Jāsān* or *Jāshān*[**].

We will propose *Jashan* as the Arabic rendering of the name, as it is more precise, and consistent with the way the original name was recorded in the Hebrew scripture. Indeed, we can find echoes of this name in the Laḥij province of Yemen, specifically in the directorate of al-Qubayṭah, where the mountain sanctuary of al-Yūsifīn[*] harbors the hamlet of Jashan[10], to this very day.

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10) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=52549

* The Qurʾān, in **(12:100),** clearly describes Joseph's siblings as having previously been among the *badū*. Although the English translation of this term is "Bedouins", it is in fact a common noun in Arabic, which denotes those who live in the wilderness or semi-desert regions (*al-bādiah*). It was Joseph's intention to facilitate the transition of his siblings from a nomadic existence to a sedentary lifestyle of commerce, in Miṣr.

** The Hebrew letter ג (*Gimel*) is vocalized as a hard *g* sound. Its Arabic counterpart is the *Jīm* letter, pronounced as a soft *j*.

The province of Laḥij shares borders with Taʿiz, where the sacred Mount Qadas is located, in what was historically known as *Mikhlāf al-Suḥūl*. The latter constitutes the most fertile region in the entire Arabian Peninsula. From the geography hinted at in the Torah, it can be surmised that Jacob started his journey somewhere in the semi-arid regions to the north and north-east of Laḥij, and eventually reached Taʿiz by way of Jashan (Geshen), where he resided for a while (see the next map).

This means that Jacob, accompanied by his children and livestock, reached the Miṣr of Yemen (Miṣrim), in Mikhlāf al-Suḥūl, where he sought refuge from the famine that had devastated the territories of the Canaanites, in the central and northern parts of the country. In fact, Yemeni folklore is known for a famous adage – a sort of mantra or litany reiterated in times of crises – which forewarns those who are attempting to escape death that they shall not find refuge; whereas it recommends to those who are fleeing famine to head to the Suḥūl region.

Being that the Israelites were nomads, it makes perfect sense that the citizens of Miṣrim, who were sedentary farmers and tradesmen, would view them with contempt, and consider them "unclean". One passage in the Old Testament which best describes this sentiment towards nomadic people is the following:

It will happen, when Pharʿh summons you, and will say: "What is your occupation?", that you shall say: "Your servants have been keepers of cattle from our youth even until now; both we, and our fathers". That you may dwell in the land of Geshen; for every shepherd is an abomination to the Miṣrim (Genesis 46: 33, 34).

This tension between sedentary and nomadic peoples stems from Arabian traditions that have existed for ages untold. We can find echoes of it in the Biblical account of Cain (the shepherd) and his "brother", Abel (the pastoralist). It is also paralleled in the legends of Mesopotamia, where ancient Sumerian songs recorded the bitter rivalry between the shepherd and the peasant, and their struggle to win the heart of Ishtar, the goddess of fertility.

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* Note the name *al-Yūsefīn,* which designates the mountain site where Jashan is situated. The name is a derivative of *Yūsuf* (Joseph). Could this be a mere coincidence? Or is it perhaps the ethereal remnant of a long-forgotten local legend?

In the classical Arabian chronicles, this same conflict is expressed in terms of ʿAdnān versus Qaḥṭān, which has long been misunderstood to be the clash between the tribes of the north (the Ḥijāz and Najd), who are said to be the descendants of ʿAdnān, and those of the south (Yemen and Ḥaḍramawt), who are supposedly children of Qaḥṭān. However, upon closer scrutiny of the root terms *ʿadn* and *qaḥṭ*, we find that the first conveys the meaning of stability (as in a sedentary existence in lush, organic lands), whereas the second literally means "dryness" or "drought" (as in a desiccated land, whose inhabitants are forced to adopt a nomadic lifestyle). It is our view that ʿAdnān and Qaḥṭān[*] are not actual, historical tribal patriarchs, but symbolic figures who represent two opposite ideals or ways of life. The struggle between their respective tribes was not a struggle of "North" versus "South", but of sedentary, pastoral Arabs versus their nomadic adversaries.

Map 4: Jacob's possible route from the semi-arid regions of central Yemen, in Shabwah, al-Bayḍāʾ and Maʾrib, southwards to the fertile al-Suḥūl region (Ibb and Taʿiz), by way of Laḥij

There lies the spectacular and rugged region of fertile country, encompassing several provinces of Yemen, which the Bible calls "Land of Miṣrim". The Children of Israel were forced to negotiate dozens of valleys and treacherous mountain slopes on their way to meet their god in an unforgiving wilderness.

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* The very name *Qaḥṭān*, often inaccurately represented as *Joktan* in English, features in the Old Testament's lineages as *Yqṭn* (קטיּ), who is said to have been the son of ʿAber. (See, for instance **Genesis – 10:25**). According to ancient Yemeni folklore, Qaḥṭān ibn ʿĀber, was the legendary father of the Arabs of Ḥaḍramawt (the same *Hazarmaveth* of the Bible). Once again, we have evidence which categorically nullifies any relation between the Torah and Palestine.

Surely, one can imagine the hardship and torment they must have endured on this pilgrimage route. One can also understand their pettish complaints to Moses, accusing him of having taken them out of Miṣrim where, despite their state of bondage, they had easy access to food and relatively generous means of living, and dooming them to roam the wild territories of Abyan, Laḥij and al-Ḍāliʿ which, by comparison, were scarce in water and arid of soil.

Many of the names of geographical sites situated within the Suḥūl region of Yemen, notably the numerous waterways which feed it, can be found to the letter in the Torah scripture, especially in the Book of Exodus. We will encounter these places repeatedly throughout our quest to uncover the untold history of the Israelites. The region in question was subdued by the Minaeans of Maʿīn, when their kingdom expanded from the Jawf region to incorporate vast territories of Yemen, including a considerable stretch of the Red Sea coast.

The Suḥūl Valley and the Land of Miṣrim

Throughout its long history, Yemen has been known for its great river valleys, considered by geographers and explorers alike to be among the most fertile regions in the entire Arabian Peninsula. However, the great vale of al-Suḥūl has, for many centuries, occupied a special place in the consciousness of Yemenis, enflaming their imagination with its truly exceptional abundance and breathtakingly beautiful vistas. Among the generations of old, the famous Mikhlāf al-Suḥūl came to be known literally as *Miṣr al-Yaman*, a title attested by the great geographer and historian, al-Hamadāni (893 – 947 AD). In his precious gazetteer **Character of the Arabian Peninsula,** he provides a very accurate description of the Mikhlāf, which was renowned for its abundance of grain, even during times of famine, and whose inhabitants developed an amazing technique for the storage of produce, unmatched in the ancient world.

Here follows is a paraphrase, in contemporary language, of al-Hamadāni's testimony regarding this storage method:

[The process of storing agricultural crops, particularly corn, barley and wheat, was characterized by its ability to ensure that the produce would remain fit for consumption for a long time. As such, these types of commodities could be

preserved for over thirty years at a time. Because corn in particular can be grown only in warm climes, the Yemenis devised an amazing means of stowing it, by digging underground stores (or landfills, so to speak), each of which could contain a ton of the crop, then expertly sealing each cavity with stoppers made from tree leaves. This technique would ensure that the crop retained its quality even after decades. If any of these storage vaults was to be opened, the corn would have to be left for several days to cool, and for its vapors to settle. Anyone who entered the landfill before that time would subject themselves to bodily harm from the intense heat][11].

It can be safely said that there is no classical text which more accurately describes the patterns of storing food in anticipation of famine, than al-Hamadāni's analysis of the landfill systems of the historic Suḥūl region of Yemen. The technique he described bears all the hallmarks of an authentic tradition, passed down through many generations, and its characteristics can help us better appreciate the story of Joseph and his appointment as overseer of the granaries of Miṣrim.

The agricultural produce of Mikhlāf al-Suḥūl was transported via camel caravans to various corners of the ancient world. The historic boundary of the Mikhlāf extended from what is today the Ibb province, to Ta'iz, and constituted the southernmost limits of the Minaean state, which is known to archeologists as *Ma'īn Miṣrn.* This kingdom was founded around 1700 BC by a line of kings (five successive dynasties) who migrated from the Ḥaḍramawt region.

The diligent study of the historic circumstances which accompanied the rise of the Minaean kingdom will demonstrate the fact that the rivalry between the sedentary tribes of Ḥaḍramawt and those of the Jawf region had both a commercial and a religious aspect. The first was reflected in the struggle for control of the incense route, while the second became evident upon the victory of the Minaeans and the emergence of their national deity Wadd, who eclipsed his counterpart from Ḥaḍramawt, the god Sīn. In the ancient Ḥaḍramaic customs, the sun and moon symbolized the divine mother and son duality, echoes of which can be found in the legendary traditions of Yemen (Hājar and her son Isma'īl; Maryam and her son 'Īsa; etc...).

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11) Arabic readers can refer to the original passage which mentions "Miṣr al-Yemen", in al-Hamadāni's **Ṣifat Jazīrat al-'Arab** – 1st Edition, Irshād Library, Ṣan'ā' – 1990 (p. 214).

With the gradual decline of the deity Sīn, as a result of the spread of the Minaean culture, the mother – son duality was subverted and replaced with the patriarchal father – son dyad adopted by the tribes of al-Jawf. This in turn would find its way into the traditions of the Yemenis (Ibrahīm and Isḥāq; Dāwud and Sulaymān; etc...).

It would appear that certain kings of the Ḥaḍramaic line, upon realizing that their culture was on the verge of collapse, defected from their official religious order, abandoned their ancestral god figure Sīn, and sought to establish an offshoot kingdom which encompassed the territories of al-Jawf, whose central deity would be Wadd.

The two deities mentioned above both feature in the Qur'ān. The first appears in the following passage:

{And they said: "Do not abandon your gods. Do not abandon **Wadd**, nor Sawā', nor Yagūth, Ya'ūq and Nasr" * And they have misguided many, but We only increase the wicked in misguidance}...**[71:23,24].**

As for the second, it occurs in [36:1], where it has been incorrectly interpreted as separate letters, and vocalized *yā' – sīn*, when it is actually a single word:

{**Yasīn** * By the wise Qur'ān * You are of the emissaries * Upon a straight path * The revelation of the Most Honorable, the Merciful * To warn a people whose fathers were not warned, for they are unaware * The sentence has been deserved by most of them, for they do not believe}...**[36:1-7].**
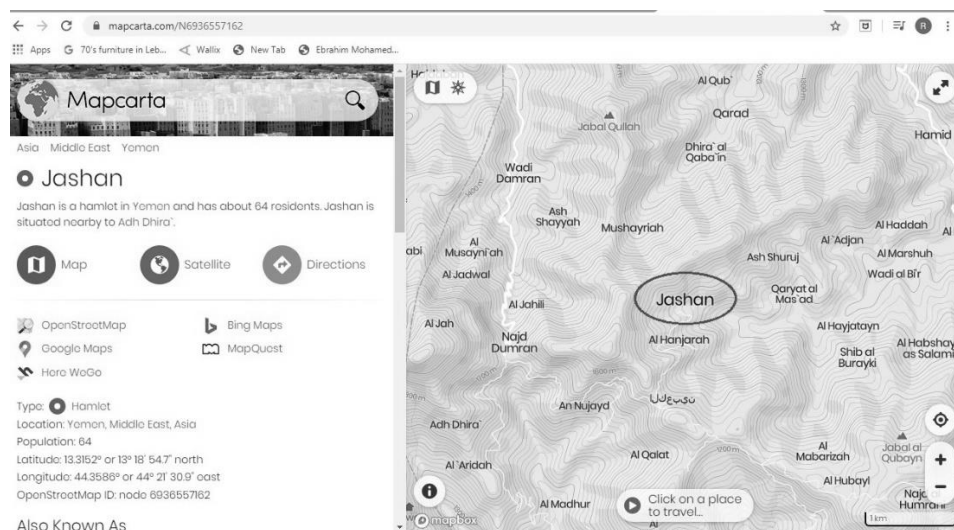
The *y-* prefix in *Yasīn* is a superfluous Ḥimyaritic vowel that is a relic of ancient vocal traditions, as in *'Arab – Ya'rab, Karb – Yakrib,* and *Hūd – Yahūd.* The actual name is no doubt *Sīn*; a religious title which also designated a number of old Babylonian kings, such as Narām-Sīn [12].

British explorer, writer, and colonial intelligence officer Harry St. John Philby (1885 – 1960) was the first to read the famous Minaean inscription unearthed in

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12) The name literally means "Beloved of the Moon God Sīn". He was a ruler of the Akkadian Empire, reigning from 2254 to 2218 BC, and was the third successor and grandson of King Sargon of Akkad. Under Narām- Sīn, the empire achieved the peak of its dominion, expanding to include all of Iraq, Western Iran, South Anatolia, and the Levant. The Akkadian Empire lasted 120 years, but eventually declined due the weakness of the monarchs who succeeded Narām-Sīn.

Yemen which features the name *Maʿīn Miṣrn,* around the year 1953. The Musnad text commemorates a conflict that took place between Miṣrn and Mīdi, leading many Biblical scholars and archeologists – among them William Foxwell Albright, Fritz Hommel, and Philby himself – to speculate that the name *Mīdi* refers to Midian. The latter was presumed to be a large territory, extending from the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt to the Moab region of Jordan, despite the lack of archeological evidence for this assumption. Other scholars, who were adamant that *Miṣrn* was synonymous with Egypt, postulated that *Mīdi* refers to Media, an autonomous region of ancient Iran. This opinion was also the product of orientalist fantasy, as there is no proof whatsoever for an all-out war between Egypt and Persia, during the era when the inscription was made.

It is our view that the *Mīdi* of the South Arabian texts refers to ancient Yemeni tribes of the namesake, who occupied a large strip of the Red Sea coast, from the Ḥajjah province to the fringes of the Ḥijāz region. These tribes established a harbor town that still exists to this day, and is known as the Port of Mīdi[13]. It is therefore very likely that these tribes were engaged in confrontations with the Minaeans of Miṣrn (Miṣrim) who, at the time, were at the height of their powers and territorial ambition, and had their sights set on leading the trade of the ancient world by sea.

Map 5: Jashan, Yemen
(Source: https://mapcarta.com/N6936557162)

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13) See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midi_District

On the other hand, the term *Ashr* appears alongside *Miṣrn* in the Musnad inscription designated as "Glaser 1155" (or "RES 3022"), leading some archeologists to conclude that the first term is a common noun which simply means "wilderness". Other scholars, notably Fritz Hommel and Eduard Glaser, read the term as *Shur*, a territory which they speculated lay to the northeast of Egypt, and whose inhabitants are Bedouin tribes called *Asshurim* (אשורם) which the Old Testament mentions side by side with the *Laṭushim* (לטושם) and the *Laummim* (לאמים)[*].

The appearance of the name *Ashr* in a South Arabian (Minaean) inscription confirms our view that the name *Miṣr – Miṣrn*, which also features in the text, refers not to Egypt, but to the kingdom of Maʿīn, whose capital was located in the Jawf province of Yemen. This is further supported by the fact that the same engraving also speaks of several Yemeni tribes, among them the tribe of Khūlān-Jadd (*Khwln Gddn*) having raided a Sabaic trade caravan.

According to the Musnad inscriptions, the Minaeans recorded their religious texts in a language that was known as "Canaanite", a title that would be used to describe them. In parallel, we find that the Torah designated their territorial domain as the "Land of Canaan", which has absolutely no relation to Palestine, as commonly thought. This domain extended from the Jawf province in the north of Yemen, to Ibb and Taʿiz in the south. It encompassed the coastal areas of Ḥajjah and al-Ḥudaydah, as well as parts of Laḥij, al-Ḍaliʿ, and al-Bayḍāʾ. There lay the Miṣrim of the Old Testament, which the Qurʾān calls *Miṣr*, and confirms was part of what it describes as "The Blessed Land" inherited by the Israelites[**].

Finally, we would reaffirm to our readers that the Biblical term "Canaanite" (Kanʿāni), much like "Hebrew" (ʿIbri), does not refer to a specific race or tribe of people, but is more accurately a characterization meant to highlight a certain religious community that adopted a particular lifestyle, and to differentiate it from other groups embracing different beliefs and values.

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[*] Genesis (25:3).

[**] Qurʾān (7:137).

CHAPTER TWO

MORE THAN AN ESCAPE

They will know that I am Yhwh, their God, who brought them out of Miṣrim so that I might dwell among them. I am Yhwh, their God (Exodus 29:46).

The above verse asserts that the Exodus was not merely about the liberation of the Children of Israel from oppression, but also had a spiritual dimension which can be summarized in the following central idea: for any group of people to have their own creed, as dictated by their deity, it was necessary – in ancient times at least – for them to undertake a religious migration of sorts, which inevitably placed them in a state of estrangement from other groups or cultural systems. It is only through this separation from their pagan milieu that that they can become a chosen people.

Such is the true motive of a mass migration characterized by all kinds of hardship, hunger, and misery, as its subjects travel the road from a lush, organic world of plentiful bounty, to a savage, unforgiving wilderness. It is the epitome of faith in one's deity, very much akin to the humble servant who observes a long fast, thereby taking a vow of hunger as a means of purification. It is a symbolic journey from a world of fullness and fertility to a world of hunger and barrenness.

To that end, the Israelites had to establish their new rituals in pure or "unsoiled" places, which they searched for tirelessly, and which they imparted with all the necessary sacredness. Thus, the passage we quoted above confirms the religious aspect of the Israelite migration from Miṣrim, viewing it as a means of transcendence of a people to meet their supreme deity.

What is truly interesting about this particular part of the Torah scripture is that the pilgrimage made it a point to seek out a specific mountain called *Qadas – Qadash* (קדש). This becomes clearly evident once we have read the passages of Exodus from a new perspective. In fact, the very name of this geographic landmark conveys the meaning of sacredness or holiness, in both Hebrew and Arabic. The special reverence afforded by the people of Yemen towards Mount Qadas, which lies in the southwestern part of the Taʿiz governorate, has been evident for many generations, and can be more deeply understood once we have related it to the ritualistic pilgrimage of Moses and his people.

Two years after their departure from Miṣrim, the large human procession was forced to make a stop, whereby Moses asked all the tribes to erect the sacred Tabernacle (the "Tent of the Congregation"), for the purpose of observing certain religious rites pertaining to the symbolic earthly dwelling place of Jehovah. As such, the mass migration from Miṣrim was not simply a flight from the oppression of Pharaoh, but a journey to meet the Savior.

In this chapter, we will address some of the central themes of the Exodus, and analyze them in specific and concise points, to facilitate the subject for our non-specialist readers.

A Religious Migration

What we can say concerning the pilgrimage led by Moses is that it was not merely a mass migration which occurred only once, for the purpose of fleeing from Pharaoh, as is commonly professed. Rather, it was a series of treks, each culminating in the reverence of a new place of worship in the wilderness, consecrated to the god who had chosen his people. To reiterate, the Children of Israel made repeated stops on their journey out of Miṣrim, whereby they erected the Tabernacle and made slaughtered offerings to Jehovah. More so, Moses had enough time to instruct the Levite priests to stitch their garments and embroider them with gold thread.

Contrary to all common perceptions about the Exodus, it will be viewed throughout this research as a religious narrative recorded during different periods of the Israelite pilgrimage, and during successive seasons thereof, which occurred within specific months. This is evident from the discrepancies in the language of the text and the repetition of the names of the geographic sites pertaining to the event. A thorough analysis of the scripture further leads us to the firm conviction that the narrative in question revolves around a rather long period of pilgrimage which did not consist of a single migration, but actually took place in stages, and involved more than one destination.

To illustrate, we will give an example from the Book of Numbers, describing a scene which clearly does not depict a lost group of people wandering aimlessly in an arid desert, or merely evading the wrath of a tyrant.

And it came to pass on the day that Moses had fully set up the tabernacle, and had anointed it, and sanctified it, and all the instruments thereof, both the altar and all the vessels thereof, and had anointed them, and sanctified them; that the princes of Israel, heads of the house of their fathers, who were the princes of the tribes, and were over them that were numbered, offered. And they brought their offering before Yhwh, six covered wagons, and twelve oxen; a wagon for two of the princes, and for each one an ox. And they brought them before the tabernacle. And Yhwh spoke unto Moses, saying: "Take it of them, that they may be to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; and thou shalt give them unto the Levites, to every man according to his service" (Numbers 7: 1 – 5).

For what purpose would Moses make offerings of cows and oxen to the Lord, while leading a group of refugees supposedly having fled from an Egyptian king? Does the above scene even hint that the Israelites were lost and hungry in a desert?

The ritual of offering holy sacrifice[*] particularly consisting of livestock, at a lofty mountain sanctuary, is not a tradition that was familiar in Egypt. Archeologists – Western and Israeli alike – who excavated expansive regions of the "Sinai Peninsula" during its occupation in 1967, not to mention the entire length and width of Palestine throughout over 70 years, have failed to provide any evidence of large, rocky sacrificial mounds, numerous enough to accommodate such an abundance of offerings as told of in the Torah.

On the contrary, the practice of offering oxen in mountain temples is an ancient, South Arabian tradition. Even today, we can see the vestiges of many sacrificial sites consisting of stony altars, both large and small, scattered throughout Yemen, adorned by sculptures and motifs depicting the stylized heads of bulls.

On this occasion, we are entitled to pose the following questions:

1) How does the ritual of offering cattle relate to the rites observed by the Sabaic Makribs of Yemen?
2) Why does the term *karubim* (meaning "saints", "divine agents", or "angels") feature in the Old Testament?
3) What relation could this term have had with the Makribs (or Makāribah), who reigned during the first Sabaic age?

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[*] The same incident is recounted in the Qur'ān (2: 67 – 71), and within the context of the Night Journey.

It is truly remarkable that Moses would enjoin the Levite priests to embroider their vestments with depictions of the divine emissaries (*karubim*) of the Lord, whereas we know, from numerous sourcebooks on Yemeni history, supported by inscriptions unearthed in Yemen, that the title of *Karb – Makrib* designated the King-Priest of Saba', who was thought to be the intermediary between the people and their deity. This could mean that the books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were originally penned during the early Sabaic era, when the Makribs ruled over the unified, federal tribal kingdom that had risen after the defeat of Maʿīn Miṣrn.

The name *Saba* appeared early in the history of ancient Iraq, particularly in the Sumerian texts (around 2,500 BC), where it designated a tribe that was known for trading in precious stones and incense. This is interesting, as it supports the very viable theory that the great migrations which established the earliest civilizations of Mesopotamia and the Levant had indeed originated in South Arabia (what is today Yemen and Oman). Consequently, archeologist K. Mlaker's postulation that the era of the Makribs began around 800 BC seems inaccurate, in light of recent archeological findings.

Makribs and Karubim

Is there indeed a semantic relationship between the Hebrew term *karubim* (plural of *karb*) and the title of "Makāribah" (plural form of *Makrib*) once used by the kings of Yemen as a religious honorary?

What we can confirm in this regard is that Karb-Īl Watr, who rose to power around 650 BC, gave up the religious title of *Makrib* and heretofore became designated only as "King". In other words, he was the first Sabaic monarch to officially separate the role of religious authority from that of political governance, relinquishing the former to the priesthood and retaining the latter for himself.

As we have already demonstrated, the term *karubim* (כרובים) can be a reference to unearthly beings (angels), holy emissaries, or divine intermediaries. The same can be said of *Makrib – Makāribah* in the ancient Yemeni dialects. The Arabic equivalent to the word can be either *Muqarrib* (meaning: "he who makes

offerings to the deity") or Muqarrab (meaning: "he who is brought close to the deity, or intercedes on behalf of the latter" – a spiritual leader of sorts). It is our view that the Biblical texts which bear mention of the *karubim*[*] can be traced back to the Early Sabaic era, when the political power of the tribal kings was integrated with their spiritual authority.

It would appear that some jurists of later periods were aware of this etymological aspect. For example, in his treatise on angels in Islamic folklore, the Egyptian scholar of Persian origin, Abū al-Faḍl al-Suyūṭī (1445 – 1505 AD), who lived during the Mamlūk Era, wrote the following under his definition of the term *Makrib*:

[The angels of mercy are the Rūḥāniyyūn (... ...) and the angels of chastisement are the Karubiyyūn, among whom are Gabriel, Michael, and Israfel, and they are "The Muqarrabūn" (a term derived) *from **karb** (or else) **qarb**][14].

The Makribs of Yemen personified the concept of combining the functions of royalty and priesthood (or prophecy). It is possibly for this reason that Dāwud (David) and Sulaymān (Solomon) became kings as well as prophets, in Islamic mythological traditions. What is worth noting however, is that the Torah scripture does not refer to them as prophets, but merely as kings. It is very likely that Islamic folklore contributed to the propagation of this image, in the context of a late recollection of the era of the Makribs of Yemen.

Here follows are passages from the Old Testament describing the gilded karubim motifs adorning the Temple erected by Solomon:

And he overlaid the **karubim** with gold. And he carved all the walls of the house roundabout with carved figures of **karubim** and palm trees and open flowers, within and without (1st Kings 6: 28, 29).

He engraved **karubim**, lions and palm trees on the surfaces of the supports and on the panels, in every available space, with wreaths all around (1st Kings 7: 36).

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14) Excerpt taken from Suyūṭī's ***Al-Ḥabā'ik fi Akhbār al-Malā'ik*** (English: ***Angels in Islam***) – Published by Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, Beirut – 1988 (p. 251).

* In the English translations of the Old Testament scripture, the term is rendered as *cherub* (singular) or *cherubs* (plural).

The aim of these extracts from the Torah is to trace the cultural and spiritual framework of the scripture, in order for us to better grasp the particulars of the Israelites' religious migration to meet their Lord in the wilderness regions of South Arabia. This ritualistic journey, falsely assumed to be pertaining to mere fugitives from Egypt, was most certainly not undertaken by a group of clans wandering aimlessly in a barren desert for forty years, all the while slaughtering cattle and erecting tabernacles for prayer. The Israelites were in fact pilgrims on a religious excursion, roaming numerous hallowed sites.

Here is another example from the scripture:

And he brought the bullock for the sin offering: and Aaron and his sons laid their hands upon the head of the bullock for the sin offering. And he slew it; and Moses took the blood, and put it upon the horns of the altar roundabout with his finger, and purified the altar, and poured the blood at the bottom of the altar, and sanctified it, to make reconciliation upon it. And he took all the fat that was upon the inwards, and the caul above the liver, and the two kidneys, and their fat, and Moses burned it upon the altar (Leviticus 8: 14 – 16).

At this point, we can provide the reader with a brief insight about South Arabian temples that witnessed these same rituals, starting from the first Sabaic age (850 BC, according to the prevailing and questionnable opinion of archeologists), up until the beginning of the Christian era. Among the most prominent of these were the temples of Riyām and Tarʻt. What is remarkable about the inscriptions unearthed from these two mountain sites in particular is that the rituals required the offering to be made in the valley, not on the summit, and that the basin itself be sealed off to prevent the flow of blood from the sacrificial animals.

The ritualistic slaughter of bulls is an ancient Yemeni tradition, traces of which can be found in the Old Testament. It is mentioned repeatedly in commemorative texts etched in stone, discovered in that country. These relics also mention a lunar deity by the name *Ta'lib,* who occupied a unique position in the South Arabian pantheon, and who ordained his followers to slaughter 700 heads of cattle in the span of a single day. He also required that the animals all be in sound condition, and free from any defects. Such a large number is comparable only to the oxen offered by Moses, as recounted in the Torah.

The great Yemeni historian and geographer al-Hamadāni (died 947 AD) recorded some facts related to these sacrificial rites, whose echoes resonated even during his day and age. Among his notes are precious references to the Temple of Riyām, in which he wrote:

[As for Riyām, it is a sanctuary – originally a hermitage – and a site of pilgrimage, located on the summit of the Atwah Mountain, within the country of Hamadān (... ...) and around it are consecrated sites (... ...) parts of it still stand even today, in the year 330 to the Hijrah][15].

The significance of al-Hamadāni's description becomes all the more revealing once we realize that the pilgrimage led by Moses did in fact reach a particular mountain whose name features in the Torah as *Hthwah* among a series of sacred landmarks the Israelites visited and dedicated for the performing of sacrificial rites. Ignoring or undervaluing the implications of this occurrence is therefore no longer acceptable.

Among the most important of Yemen's ancient temples known for the ritual offering of livestock in large numbers were Riyām and Tr'␣t (or simply *R'␣ – Ra'␣,* by dropping the superfluous *t* prefix and suffix). The latter lent its name to a settlement called *Ra'ms* (or "Ramses", as per the English translations of the scripture), which the Israelites allegedly built in Egypt for the storage of grain. By means of an actual field inspection of these vestigial sites, it is possible to deduce that their sacred grounds covered quite an expansive area of a highland countryside throughout which numerous other temples were erected and dedicated to accommodating large numbers of pilgrims. Even today, remnants of these ancient rites can be found in the ruins of Riyām, at the foot of Mount Atwah.

Interestingly, Austrian archeologist and orientalist Eduard Glaser, who specialized in South Arabian studies and analyzed thousands of Sabaic inscriptions, described some of the temples of Yemen as being constructed in the shape of a dome. This immediately brings to mind the Tabernacle, which many traditions confirm was indeed designed in a similar fashion.

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15) Paraphrase of an excerpt from al-Hamadāni's **Kitāb al-Iklīl** (English: **The Wreath**) – Published by Dār al-Kalimah, Ṣan'ā' and Dār al-'Awdah, Beirut (Vol. VIII / p. 66).

Did the Children of Israel actually make the pilgrimage to the Temple of Atwah, during the era of the kingdom of Maʿīn Miṣrn (Miṣrim)? Could the ancient, South Arabian ritual of offering oxen be the same Biblical rite observed since the time of Moses?

Glaser found, in some of the above-mentioned shrines, stone slabs with religious inscriptions dating to the early Christian era. This means that the ritual slaughter of bulls continued in Yemen for quite a long time. As such, it is possible to envision the rites observed by Moses in the Tabernacle, within two years of the Israelites' migration from Miṣrim, as having taken place in a harsh, mountainous wilderness, dotted with rocky altars and deep, enclosed valleys filled with the blood shed from the sacrificial offerings. Such an environment can hardly be reconciled with the terrain of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.

Primary Conception of the Pilgrimage Seasons in Ancient Yemen

An entire chapter of this book will be dedicated to listing the specific sites visited by the Israelites, wherein we will pinpoint their locations within the geography of Yemen. At this point, however, we will present a preliminary description of the migration of the Israelites led by Moses, with the aim of demonstrating the general circumstances of the seasonal pilgrimage ritual.

In this regard, we would reiterate to our readers what we said on previous occasions: we are not simply searching for similarities in the names of places and landmarks, as this is not in the least bit our objective. What we are aiming for is to draw a complete religious and cultural framework for the Biblical stories, based on archeological inscriptions and scientific evidence.

The Israelite tribes, having performed a series of rites and rituals in the wilderness, during the second year of their departure from Miṣrim, carried on with their religious migration, sojourning in a series of places which they consecrated. In our view, this is sufficient proof that their journey was far more than merely a flight from persecution by a tyrannical ruler. It was, by all accounts, a continuous pilgrimage.

Let us start with the following passage from the scripture:

And on the day that the tabernacle was reared up the cloud covered the tabernacle, namely, the tent of the testimony: and at even there was upon the tabernacle as it were the appearance of fire, until the morning. So it was at all times: the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night. And whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, then after that the children of Israel journeyed: and in the place where the cloud abode, there the children of Israel encamped. At the commandment of Yhwh the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of Yhwh they pitched: as long as the cloud abode upon the tabernacle, they rested in their tents (Numbers 9: 15 – 18).

So it was, that within a single month of their initial departure from Miṣrim, and on their way to sanctify the sites of their encounters with the god who had chosen them as his people, the Israelites found the cloud accompanying them during their travels and respites. This is symbolic of their Lord, who manifested in the form of a heavenly veil, to cloak the pilgrims by day and by night.

And it came to pass that on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of **Sini**; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of **Pharan** (Numbers 10: 11, 12).

Tracing the path of the Israelites' journey through the wilderness will allow us to learn about the geography of the religious ritual they undertook. It is evident that they left the foothills of Sini (סיני), pursuing the heavenly cloud all the way to Pharan (פארן), from whence they continued their trek. Struck with hunger and exhaustion, they deplored their miserable state to Moses, and the Lord answered by sending them sustenance in the form quails from the sea:

Then Moses went back to the camp, with the elders of Israel. And there went forth a wind from Yhwh, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth (Numbers 11: 30, 31).

The fact remains that there are no mountainous isolations bearing the names of *Sini* (סיני), *Sin* (סין), or *Ṣn* (צן), anywhere in Egypt; nor is there a wilderness called *Pharan* in the Levant, for that matter.

It is very difficult for one to imagine that a mass of fugitives from the Nile Delta region could roam the Sinai Peninsula – which during Moses' time was completely under the control of Egypt's strong, centralized state – while herding such a large number of bulls and cows, marching, stopping, and then marching again whenever a cloud was in sight. It is equally hard to believe that these escapees could halt their trek for days at a time to make sacrificial offerings, or engage in decorating the Tabernacle of the Lord, let alone gather quail from the seashore, at a distance of a full day's journey on foot. In actuality, these texts, and others from Exodus and Numbers, paint the picture of a religious environment which cannot be reconciled with that of Egyptian culture, during that particular era. On the contrary, we can find evidence in the Yemen of such sacred sites, which served as places of ancient pilgrimage, and are identifiable even today by their very same Biblical names.

The isolation known as *al-Ṣanah* is located within the directorate of al-Maʿāfir, in the Yemeni province of Taʿiz[16]. In that same directorate, we can also find Farān (Pharan), which lies in the neighboring isolation of al-Shiʿūbah[17]. What is truly astonishing is that these sites are all located at a stone's throw from the Red Sea, whose coast is known historically to be a nesting ground for quail. Another candidate for the *Pharan* of the Torah is the arid wilderness of Farān[18], in the Abyan province, a region known for its harsh climate.

Map 6: Governorate of Abyan

16) See: Arabic Wikipedia (عزلة الصنة). Also, refer to: https://www.geonames.org/8735862/as-sanah.html
17) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=84851
18) https://en.climate-data.org/asia/yemen/abyan-governorate/faran-543967/

Elsewhere in the Torah, we come across the following:

And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of Yhwh was kindled against the people, and Yhwh smote the people with a very great plague. And he called the name of that place **Qabruth Hthawah**, because there they buried the people who lusted. From Qabruth Hthawah the people journeyed unto **Ḥaṣruth**; and they abode at Ḥaṣruth (Numbers 11: 33 – 35).

A brief pause is in order here, as we contemplate the above passage, which canserve as a study model for the cultural environment of the Exodus.

The events described in the passage obviously involve a group of pilgrims moving from one place to another. Throughout the course of their expedition, it is understandable that there were certain disputes and incidents of bickering which served to anger their Lord. In fact, no sooner had an entire month elapsed from the onset of their journey, that an altercation between Moses and Miriam took place, which brought about the indignation of Jehovah. According to the Biblical account, Miriam reproached Moses for marrying a pagan Cushite woman, thus arousing animosity between the two siblings. As a result, the Lord became displeased with Miriam, and she was stricken with leprosy. Moses, however, was sorrowful, and he addressed Jehovah with supplication:

And Moses cried unto Yhwh saying: "Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee". And Yhwh said unto Moses: "If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received again". And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days, and the people did not move from that place until Miriam was brought in again. And afterward the people journeyed from Ḥaṣruth, and encamped in the wilderness of Pharan (Numbers 12: 13 – 16).

Thus, the migrating pilgrims, with particles of meat from their offerings still caught between their teeth, had enough time on their hands to execute the Lord's command to condemn a woman who, in Jehovah's eyes, had wronged herself by objecting to the marriage of the Israelite savior to a pagan woman. Miriam enjoined the Levite priests to prevent the consummation of the ceremony, thus incurring the wrath of the Lord, who banished her from the encampment for an entire week.

Is it logical to imagine the god of the Israelites being so indignant towards his faithful servants, to the extent of punishing them for their refusal to intermarry with members of other tribes? In our view, this incident demonstrates that the narrative of the Exodus is not a historical one, but more likely consists of a theological parable, whose purpose is to establish a new charter for matrimonial regulations. It is a fable that seeped into the fabric of a religious text, with the aim of representing the stages of evolution of the ancient Mosaic Law, which at one point allowed marriage without restrictions.

By no means is there any indication or even a hint, in the entire account, that the Israelites feared Egyptian revenge or retaliation, while their prophet and savior took the time to marry, and even entered into a conflict with his "sister", which culminated in her temporary estrangement from the community. More so, as we pointed out earlier, it is possible that Moses and Miriam traced their common lineage to ʿAmram (which may have been a small clan within the tribe of Levi), or both hailed from a place bearing that name.

What of the name *Cush – Kush*, which has long been synonymous with the south Nubian regions of Sudan and Ethiopia? Late British Professor Edward Ullendorf (1920 – 2011), one of the most prominent authorities on Old Testament links to Ethiopia, argued that *Cush* probably referred to two domains on both sides of the Red Sea. Two centuries before him, German scholar Johann David Michaelis (1717 – 1791) arrived at the same conclusion[*]. In fact, we can find a vestigial trace of Cush today, in the shape of a hamlet bearing that name, located in the Wiṣāb al-ʿĀli directorate of the Dhamār province of Yemen[19].

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19) See: https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=15607

* Looking up the entry on "Kush" in *Wikipedia*, we get the following information:

[*Cush (also Kush, Biblical כּוּשׁ Kûš) was, according to the Bible, the eldest son of Ham, brother of Mizraim (Egypt), Canaan and the father of the Biblical characters Nimrod, and Raamah, mentioned in the "Table of Nations" in Genesis 10:6 and I Chronicles 1:8. He is traditionally considered the eponymous ancestor of the people of Cush, a dark-skinned people inhabiting the country surrounded by the River Gihon, identified in antiquity with Arabia Felix (i.e. Yemen) and Aethiopia (i.e. all Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the Upper Nile)].*

Disregarding the false assertion that *Mizraim* is synonymous with Egypt, we find reference to ancient sources identifying the Land of Kush as encompassing territories in both Yemen and Ethiopia. This lends validity to Ullendorf's conclusions.

The Biblical allusion to Cush – Kush may very well be symbolic of the struggles endured by the Israelites against pagan groups in the south, but at the same time expresses conciliatory implications, through the condoning of marriage to a "gentile" woman.

The passage in Numbers states that the procession moved from Qabruth Hthawah (קברות התאוה) to Ḥaṣruth (חצרות), and from there to the wilderness of Pharan, where the pilgrims took a respite. The first place is identifiable today as *Haḍrāt**, which is situated in the very same mountain isolation of al-Shiʿūbah in Taʿiz (where lies Farān, as previously demonstrated), and belongs to a village called dhī-Habīl[20]. This means that the pilgrims carved their way through the Maʿāfir region, and headed towards the border of Laḥij. They were obviously nowhere near the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt, as there is no trace of such places there. What is even more interesting is that within the Laḥij province of Yemen, and specifically the directorate of al-Qubayṭah, we can find a hamlet called *ʿUqmat Mariam*, tucked away in the isolation of al-Yūsifīn[21].

In the coming sections of this book, we will trace the path of the Israelites' religious migration in full detail, and list the sites they visited, one by one. What we can say for now is that the textual structure of the book of Exodus exhibits a unique composition that is not without complexity, as there are layers of religious discourse which interlock and overlap with legislative and mythological concepts. It is not merely a scripture concerning the pilgrimage and migration in search of the Lord, but is also a document that is dedicated to formulating a nomadic community's conception of the land of stability (the so-called "Promised Land"). In fact, the foundation on which the saga of the Israelites is built is this very transition from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle, and the challenges that go hand in hand with it. In this context, we are forced to perceive the idea of the Promised Land from a non-religious standpoint, being that the main catalyst of the Exodus in the first place was the dream of finding a new home, where stability and prosperity could be realized, and where the migrating community could worship its god without any hindrances.

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20) See: http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=84740

21) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=52644   (also, refer to footnote #10, in Chapter 1 of this book).

* The Hebrew language does not vocalize the Arabic ḍ (*Ḍād*) letter, and renders it as ṣ (*Ṣād – Tsadey*) instead.

And Yhwh spoke to Moses, saying: "Send thou men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a prince among them" (Numbers 13: 1,2).

In geographic terms, the surveillance of the land of Canaan, as described in the above passage, was conducted after the procession of pilgrims made its way out of the Ma'āfir region, towards Laḥij, al-Ḍāle', and al-Bayḍā'. These three southern provinces of Yemen were fringe territories loosely under the authority of the Minaeans, whose political capital, Barāqish, was located in the Jawf region. To rephrase what we are saying and preclude any misgivings regarding this issue, the land of Canaan was part of the general domain of Ma'īn Miṣrn[*].

The promise received by Moses that he and his followers would be granted an abode in the land of the Canaanites – and the overthrow of Miṣrim in the process – may well have been a religious and symbolic expression of the dream of the Sabaic tribes, during the age of the Makribs, to wrestle their lands from the grasp of their Minaean adversaries. As such, it would appear that the Lord's command to Moses to send his men forth to scout and survey their Promised Land reflected the typical and traditional search of every nomadic community or immigrant group that has just come to recognize its patron deity, for a peaceful and fertile country where it may dwell and worship that deity, away from the dominion of pagan groups continually harassing it and threatening its existence.

It is evident that the Torah scripture added all the necessary religious dimensions to the story of the Exodus which, at its core origin, was the story of a nomadic people's search for a sedentary homeland. Perhaps it is for this reason that the exiles did not gain access to their promised land during Moses' time, but had to wait several decades before they could set foot therein. The Torah depicts the Exodus as having overlapping motives, whereby the dream of the new homeland was merged with the longing to meet the personal god of the migrants. That is why the narrative seems to be the product of a religious conflict with the Minaean tribes. These tribes did not venerate Jehovah, nor did they even know of him, but revered their own deity, the god *Wadd*, as we established previously.

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[*] The Qur'ān states, in plain terms, that after Pharaoh and his henchmen drowned, the stage was set for the Children of Israel to inherit the "Blessed Land", of which *Miṣr* was a part. (Refer to the passages from the Qur'ān quoted on page 30 of this book).

The Minaeans were sedentary tradesmen and peasants who were known to have used a special religious vernacular which the Torah calls "The Tongue of Canaan", (transliterated in Hebrew as *Shpht Kan'n*). In other words, the term "Canaanites" does not necessarily refer to a particular race, but rather to a group of tribes who used this dialect in their religious rituals and writings. This is in many ways similar to the term "Muslims", which does not designate a particular national identity, but is meant to encompass groups of people of different races, who use the same language for religious purposes, that being the dialect of the Qur'ān.

Indeed, artifacts unearthed in Yemen have demonstrated that the inhabitants of Ma'īn Miṣrn were a mixture of many tribes sharing a common religious language, which they used in their inscriptions within the temples of the god Wadd. On the other hand, the Israelites were pastoral, semi-nomadic tribes who worshipped the volcanic god, Jehovah, a non-incarnate and transcendent deity. We also mentioned earlier that the Hebrew name *Yhwh* is actually the Arabic *huwa* – meaning "He" or "Him" – with the South Arabian *y-* prefix appended to the name, much the same as in *'Arab – Y'rab, Karb – Ykrab* and *Hūd – Yahūd.*

The Children of Israel, led by their savior Moses, migrated from their ancient homeland of Miṣrim, where they had lived in relative prosperity despite their bondage. They travelled winding mountain roads and treacherous valleys, suffering hunger and hardship, on an arduous religious pilgrimage whose aim was to sanctify a particular region of land, and to ultimately settle therein.

Let us consider the following passage:

And Moses said to Yhwh: "Then the Miṣrim will hear it; for in thy might thou brought up this people from the midst of them". And they will give news to the inhabitants of this land, who have heard that thou, Yhwh, art in the midst of this people, that thou, Yhwh, lettest thyself be seen eye to eye, and that thy cloud standeth over them, and that thou goest before them, in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying: "Because Yhwh was not able to bring this people into the land that he had sworn unto them, he has therefore slain them in the wilderness" (Numbers 14: 13 – 16).

The careful analysis of these texts reveals the correlation between the nomadic community's aspiration to settle in a land of stability and the search for its patron god. These are all the necessary elements of a religious migration – a pilgrimage of sorts. There is no indication in the scripture that the Israelites became hopelessly lost in a desert, nor is there any hint of retaliation by the "Egyptian" army, or that they were hunted by any successor to the "Pharaoh".

The central observations made in this chapter form the basis of our thesis regarding the Exodus. We have avoided going into much detail here, with the aim of helping our readers understand and fully grasp the theory presented in this book.

In the following chapters, we will provide extensive details on this migration.

* * * *

EXODUS AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF YEMEN

The main theory presented in this book is that the geography of Yemen, specifically that of the ancient Maʿāfir and Suḥūl regions, with their lush valleys and tribal fiefdoms both large and small, was the real theater of the Biblical stories. The theory also proposes, in retrospect, that the so-called "Exodus", which was exaggerated and amplified by the orientalist imagination and traditional literature, was but a religious fable whose setting consisted of a limited geographical scope, and most certainly was not associated with Egypt or the Levant. More precisely, it originally gained its historical and spiritual value solely by virtue of the Torah scripture, whereas it was all but ignored by Egyptian and South Arabian records, and is completely absent from the annals of the Mesopotamian kingdoms.

To rephrase what we are saying, the Exodus was not a purely historical account, and a significant part of it was written in the traditional narrative style of priests and storytellers, in the same manner that the Arab chroniclers of old systematically exaggerated many of the events pertaining to the spread of Islam and the triumphant establishment of its first political entity in Makkah. As such, the aggrandizement of the Biblical story led to it achieving the status of a colossal, historical event, whereupon it became engrained in the imagination of successive generations, who perceived all its intricate details narrated in the scripture as being factual.

On the contrary, we know that physical records unearthed in the region are completely silent with regards to the Israelite presence and subsequent mass migration from Egypt. This supports the hypothesis that the Exodus had a very limited historical value and geographical scope. Simply put, it could not have taken place over Egypt's vast territory, nor could it have been the cross-continental affair it was portrayed to be.

In this context, we will propose a possible solution to the puzzle of the Exodus, by exploring a specific region of Yemen, covering the provinces of Dhamār, al-Bayḍāʾ, al-Ḍāliʿ, the Maʿāfir region, which extends from Ibb to Taʿiz in the south west, as well as parts of Laḥij. It is there and nowhere else that the legendary account of the Israelites' escape from Pharaoh took place.

To prove this, we will retrace the itinerary that led Moses to meet Pharaoh in the first place, before his departure from the *Miṣr – Miṣrim* of Yemen, up until the point when the Children of Israel finally settled in their promised land.

Moses' Night Journey: Precursor to the Pilgrimage

The religious migration to meet Jehovah in the wilderness, to sanctify his domain and adopt him as the patron god of the Israelites, was originally an idea entertained by Moses through consultation with his father in law Jethro, the high-priest of Madian (מדין). After their conference, Moses traveled straight from Madian to Miṣrim, to negotiate the matter with Pharaoh. This can be construed from the following passage:

And Moses went back to Jethro, his father-in-law, and said to him: "Let me go back now to my brethren in Miṣrim, and see if they are still living". And Jethro said to Moses: "Go in peace". And Yhwh said to Moses in Madian: "Go back to Miṣrim, for all the men are dead who were attempting to take your life" (Exodus 4: 18,19).

Hence Moses was a fugitive from Miṣrim in Yemen, not Egypt, and had a bounty on his head, as a result of a specific incident recounted in the Torah, namely his accidental killing of a Minaean man in a physical skirmish. Consequently, he was able to return to Miṣrim only after confirming that his seekers had all died. His return, however, was linked to a divine instruction, blessed by Jethro, who enjoined him to organize the Children of Israel's exodus from Miṣrim, and lead them on a pilgrimage to sanctify the places in which Jehovah had chosen to manifest for his chosen people.

It is very likely that the tribal traditions in the kingdom of Maʿīn Miṣrn, characterized by a certain level of spiritual tolerance, allowed for the existence of the central god Wadd alongside other, lesser deities. This served to add a special religious dimension to Moses' meeting with Pharaoh, whereby their negotiation revolved around the possibility of allowing the Israelites to venerate their own god. This is the true substance of Pharaoh's initial – albeit reluctant – permission for a large group of pastoral nomads to depart, along with their livestock and gear, on a mass pilgrimage. He allowed his subjects to have their own deity, as they represented an "impure" element in the eyes of the sedentary Minaeans, who were civilized merchants and farmers.

After Moses returned from his journey, he sought hermitage in a cave on the slopes of a mountain called *Ḥarib – Ḥarbh* (חרבה). Jethro later advised Aaron to meet his "brother" there.

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of **Madian**. And he took the flock to the far side of the wilderness, and came to **Ḥarib,** the mountain of God (Exodus 3:1).

Madian (or *Midian*, as it is sometimes rendered) is located in the Laḥij province, within a rugged and difficult terrain, surrounded by towering mountains of black granite. In 1979, we had the opportunity to wander around its territory and see it up close. Its landscape is a mixture of sand and rock, and it lies within the directorate of Ḥālmīn, where it is identifiable as *Dār al-Madān*[22]. As for Ḥarib, it is also in the Laḥij province, and precisely within the directorate of Yāfiʿ[*], which happens to be immediately adjacent to Ḥālmīn. There, in the mountainous isolation of Labʿūs, we can find the village of Ḥarīb[23].

Regarding "Pharaoh", the term actually features as *Pharʿh* (פרעה) in the Hebrew scripture. On this occasion, we would like to stress that Egyptian historical records do not ever mention this term – whether as a name or a title – in reference to its rulers. The successive monarchs of Egypt were designated "Kings" or "Queens", never as "Pharaohs". This latter title has been established in popular culture to denote the rulers of the Nile Valley, without any physical or archaeological evidence to support such a belief. In many ways, this is similar to the name *Zalikhah*, which was given to the woman who attempted to seduce Joseph. The name does not actually appear anywhere in the Torah – nor in the Qurʾān, for that matter – but was the product of popular imagination.

The name *Farʿūn*, as it appears in the Qurʾān, is one of several South Arabian phonetic versions of *Farʿn – Farʿh*. We can say that the composition of *Farʿh – Farʿūn* is similar to *Ṣūr – Ṣūrūn* (Tyre), *Ṣayd – Ṣaydūn* (Sidon), and *Shamr – Shamrūn* (Samaria). What is truly astonishing is that this term appears numerous times in the ancient inscriptions of Yemen, as a proper noun.

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22) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=27438

23) See: Arabic Wikipedia (يافع) حريب

* It is worth noting that Yāfiʿ also appears in the Hebrew scripture as *Yfyʿ* (יפיע), and is represented as *Japhia* in the English translations. The Old Testament (***Joshua 19:10-16***) classifies Yāfiʿ as being within the territorial rights of the Tribe of Zebulun, who were none other than the ancient Yemeni clan of Zubālah.

Let us look at some examples of this phenomenon:

- **First Inscription – "YM 2816"**

This is a monumental stone artifact from the Minaic era, currently on display at the Ṣanʿāʾ National Museum. It consists of an offering table with a bull head motif serving as a gutter, which reminds us once again of the ancient South Arabian sacrificial rite.

The part of the engraving that is still legible reads as such:

1 {ʾlʿz bn S¹mhkrb **ḏ-Frʿn** s³lʾ ʿttr ḏ-Fṣ—
2 d mṣrbn w-b-ʾḏn ʿttr ʾlʿz w-wld-s¹ w-b—
3 r-s¹...}

Official translation: *Alʿz son of S¹mhkrb **ḏ-Frʿn** dedicated to ʿttr ḏ-Fṣd the altar, by the authority of ʿttr; ʾlʿz and his children. And his loyalty (?)...*

The engraving was therefore made by Alʿaz, the son of Samahkrb (or Samah-Yakrab) dhū-Farʿn, who dedicated the piece to ʿAthtar (Ashtoreth).

Photo 4: Inscription "YM 2816"
(Source: Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions)

- **Second Inscription – "UAM 508"**

This is another dedicatory text from the Qatabanic era, which can be found at the University Museum of ʿAdan. It once adorned the base of a statue. The four-line epitaph reads as follows:

1 {Ḥṣrʿtt w-Whbʾl w-ʿmrtʿ w-ʿs³bm w-B—
2 [....] ʿmyt̲ʿ w-ʾls²rḫ d̲tw Ḍġytt s¹q—
3 [nyw] w-s³lʾ ʾmrʾ-s¹m ʿt̲tr w-Blw w-Mwtr
4 w-d̲t Ġḍrn w-**Frʿn** w-ʾlhy Ḥdt̲m d̲-Mnwb}

Official translation: *Ḥṣrʿtt, Whbʾl, ʿmrtʿ, ʿs³bm, B- [....] ʿmyt̲ʿ and ʾls²rḫ, the ones of the family Ḍġyt̲t, dedicated and offered to their Lords ʿt̲tr, Blw, Mwtr, d̲t Ġḍrn, Frʿn and the gods of Ḥdt̲m, those of Mnwb.*

The text states that the offering is made by several persons from the clan of Ḍaghīth, to their tribal lords, among whom is one by the name of *Farʿn*.
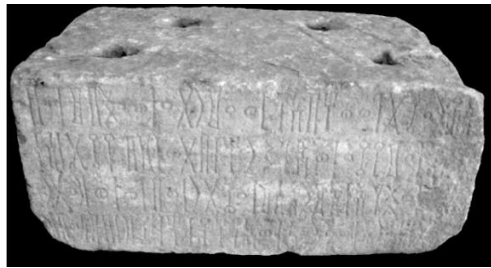

Photo 5: Inscription "UAM 508"
(Source: Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions)

- **Third Inscription – "MQ-Ḥayd Mūsa 1"**

This inscription, also referred to as "RES 4196", dates back to the Middle Sabaic era. It was examined and analyzed by an Austrian archeological expedition in Wādī dhūl-Qayl, in the province of al-Bayḍāʾ. The first four lines read as follows:

1 {**Frʿn** Yzl bn D̲rnḫ w-Hṣbḫ w-Yʿgf qyl s²ʿbnyhn Qs²mm w-Mḍḥym
2 brʾw w-hwt̲r w-hs²qr mʾgly-hmw S¹wrm w-Yrʿz̲ b-ʿly wyn-hmw d̲-Qyln
3 w-d̲y D̲hbm b-mqm mrʾy-hmw Ys¹rm Yhnʿm w-bn-hw S²mr Yhrʿs² mlky S¹—
4 bʾ w-[d̲]-Rydn b-wrḫn Md̲rʾn d̲-l-s¹t̲t-ʿs²r w-t̲lt̲ mʾtm ḫryf N—

Official translation: *Frʿn Yzl, ibn D̲rnḫ, and Hṣbḫ and Yʿgf, qyl of the two tribes of Qs²mm and Mḍḥym, they built, laid the foundations, completed their two dams S¹wrm and Yrʿz̲ above their vineyards, that of Qyln and the two of D̲hbm. With the power of their two lords Ys¹rm Yhnʿm and his son S²mr Yhrʿs², the two kings of Sabaʾ and d̲u-Raydān. In the month Md̲rʾn, in the year three hundred sixteen of the years of N-...*

Once again, we encounter *Far'n,* this time designating a man whose full name was *Far'n ibn Dharnḥ* and who, with help from the Qyl (a title meaning "Chief") of the tribes of Qashm and Mḍḥym, laid the foundations of a dam, during the era of the Sabaic king Shamr Yar'sh.
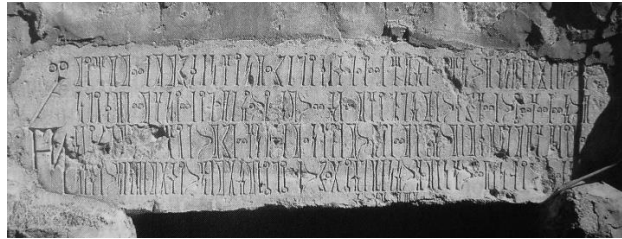

Photo 6: Inscription "RES 4196"
(Source: Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions)

From these and other ancient relics of Yemen, we can deduce that *Far'n – Far'ūn* (or *Far'h*, as per the Hebrew scripture) is a name or title that was given to tribal leaders or perhaps high-ranking army generals of Ma'īn, Qatabān, and Saba', who most certainly were not kings in the strict sense of the term. In other words, they were local chiefs of the various *mikhlāfs* (autonomous tribal fiefdoms) of Yemen. This means that the name has been a part of the historical and cultural legacy of the South Arabian peoples for a very long time.

We can also surmise, from the passages of the Torah, that Moses left Madan – Madian in Laḥij, and headed towards ancient Miṣrn in the southern quarters of the Arabian Peninsula. After his expedition, Moses obtained the approval of a Minaean tribal leader by the name of *Far'h* to free his people and lead them on a religious exodus.

Another interesting aspect regarding this term is that it also happens to be the name of several towns in Yemen. For example, we can find the village of Far't Ḥarḍah[24] within the isolation of Sarār, in the Abyan province. Another geographical site bearing this name lies in the Ḥajjah province, specifically the Kahlān 'Afar directorate, and is called simply *Far'h*[25]. There is even an ancient town called *al-Far'h,* as far north as the 'Asīr province of Saudi Arabia[26].

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24) See: Arabic Wikipedia (فرعة حرذة)

25) See: Arabic Wikipedia (فرعة (كحلان عفار)

26) See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al_Farah (note that the English spelling of the name on the Wikipedia page is actually incorrect. It should be **al-Far'h**, not *al-Farah*).

Photo 7: Ancient mountain town of al-Farʿh, in Saudi Arabia
(Source: Okaz Online Newspaper – January, 2012)

Riyām and Miriam: Male Embodiment of the Female Mother Goddess

We will make a short pause here, to explain a phenomenon that has always raised our readers' questions. It concerns the recurrence of the names of certain places or geographical features throughout the Arab world, and how they are carried over from one region to another, with some occasional minor phonetic changes.

For example, the name *Ḥarīb,* which corresponds to *Ḥrbh* in the Bible, can also be found in the province of Maʾrib (central Yemen), where it designates the name of a directorate[27]. The same observation can be made with regards to *Shamrān* (Semeron – Shemeron), a name that identifies several towns in Yemen, most notable of which is the one in the province of Ibb[28], and Bayt Shimrān, to the west of the capital, Ṣanʿāʾ[29]. As with the name *Farʿh* we analyzed in the previous section, Shamrān likewise found its way north to the territory of ʿAsīr, in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, traces of the Biblical name *Shbmh* (שבמה) can be identified today in the town of Shibām[30], in Ḥaḍramawt, which is known to tourists as the "Manhattan of the Desert", courtesy of its skyscrapers constructed from mud. There is also Shibām-Kawkabān[31], in the ʿAmrān province, north of the Yemeni capital.

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27) See: Arabic Wikipedia (مديرية حريب)
28) See: Arabic Wikipedia (شمران القفر)
29) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bayt_Shimran
30) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shibam_Hadramawt
31) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shibam_Kawkaban_District

These examples serve to clarify the following fact: the names of ancient places and sites which the Children of Israel consecrated during their religious migration eventually spread to other areas of Yemen, as a consequence of the propagation of Mosaic Law. At some point in history, as various circumstances forced the South Arabian tribes to migrate from their ancestral homeland altogether, many of these names started appearing in other regions, which explains their widespread recurrence throughout the Arab world, as far north as Iraq and the Levant[*].

Going back to Numbers, we recall Qabruth Hathwah, the site where many pilgrims were buried, after the altercation between Moses and Miriam. This place can be identified today as the isolated hamlet of al-Muqaybirāt[32], in the directorate of al-Qubayṭah, Laḥij. In fact, the very name *Muqaybirāt* is derived from the root *qbr,* which literally means "grave" in Arabic. This is, without a doubt, the same burial place the pilgrim procession had reached.

As for Hathwah, it serves as yet another example of a holy place whose name eventually made its way to another part of Yemen, where we find it in the form of *Atwah,* a ruin situated on the peak of Mount Riyām[33], in Ma'rib. This territory is bordered to the north by the province of al-Jawf, to the east by the Capital District, to the south by al-Bayḍā', and to the west by Shabwah and Ḥaḍramawt. Surprisingly, Atwah[34] is also an archeological site dotted with many ancient tombs. The name of this vestigial town appears in the South Arabian (Musnad) inscriptions as *hgrn Atwtm.* Once we recall that the *-m* in *Atwtm* is in fact the old Himyaritic suffix which served the same function as the Arabic prefix article *al-* (equivalent to "the"), the name can be read as *hijrat al-Atwah.* The term *hgrn* can, in turn, be rendered as *hgr* (same as *Miṣrn – Miṣr*), and describes the town as being a safe and peaceful haven, fulfilling all the conditions of a religious sanctuary upon which any aggression was outlawed.

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32) https://www.geonames.org/11967075/al-muqaybirat.html
33) http://www.tageo.com/index-e-ym-v-00-d-m4511194.htm
34) See Arabic Wikipedia (أثوة (أرحب

*The first thing that migrating tribes often did when settling was to give the geographical features of their new territory the same names that were known in their original homeland. This reflected their eagerness to keep an emotional linkage with the country of their birth. This process was known to the ancient Arabs as *tayammun,* a word derived from the root *ymn,* which carries a sense of good fortune or optimism.

Another similar landmark that can be found on Riyām is the Temple of Tarʿt. In our view, the name of the Biblical town of Raʿmss (רעמסס) is derived from that of the ancient deity Raʿ – meaning the "Shepherd God" or "Protector" – to whom the Temple was dedicated. Specialists in South Arabian dialects know that the -s and -t appended to many proper nouns in their written form are superfluous, and can be discarded in speech. Archeologists in Yemen are also well aware of the ancient pilgrimage rites that were held on Mount Riyām, and associated with the god Taʾleb (hence the name *Taʾleb Riyām*), whose worship eventually spread to the highlands east of Ṣanʿāʾ, and even as far north as Ṣaʿdah[35].

It remains to be noted that the name *Riyām* contains all the phonetic elements of *Miriam*, which is the name of the Mother Goddess. This derivation is evident by adding the Himyaritic *m-* prefix to the former (*Riyam – Mryam*). On the other hand, one is entitled to ask: is there any relation between the Biblical name ʿAmram (עמרם) and the governorate of ʿImrān in Yemen? Why does the Qurʾān refer to Miriam as the "Daughter of ʿImrān?" Why does it specifically designate her as the "Sister of Hārūn" (Aaron), but not the "Sister of Moses"? Moreover, does the name *Hārūn* have any relation to the god *Hrn*, whose temples were widespread in Yemen, during ages past? Can it be associated to Harān, who was the brother of Abraham, according to Jewish religious tradition? Such valid questions are particularly important for a deeper understanding of the religious dimensions of the Exodus.

With that in mind, we will now analyze the texts relevant to this subject.

The Yemeni province of ʿImrān is located about 50 kilometers north of the capital. It shares borders with the governorate of Ṣaʿdah to the north, the governorates of Ḥajjah and al-Maḥwīt to the west, and al-Jawf and Ṣanʿāʾ to the east. Today, the city of ʿImrān proper consists of two very distinct parts: the old town, surrounded by protective walls, and the small modern city built outside those walls. Many Jewish buildings were once scattered throughout the districts of the modern city. Although most of these buildings disappeared when the Jews migrated from Yemen, a few still remain to this day.

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35) See: Arabic Wikipedia (تألب ريام)

Photo 8: Mud and stone buildings in Old ʿImrān, Yemen
(Source: Wikipedia)

Map 7: Governorates of ʿImrān and Ṣaʿdah

Recently, archeologists uncovered a temple that was dedicated to the deity of the tribe of al-Marāthid or, as the Musnad inscriptions name it, *Banū Mrthdm* (note the defunct Ḥimyaritic –*m* suffix). Dhū-Marāthid, named after the tribe, was in fact none other than al-Maqah, the national deity of the State of Saba'. The temple was one of several dotting the landscape of the ʿImrān countryside, and specifically within the territories of al-Bawn and Shibām Kawkabān, north of the capital. The inscriptions also confirm that the temple itself was named *Hrn* (which can be vocalized as *Harrān*, in Arabic). It was distinguished from other religious edifices in the region in terms of its rituals, as most of the

worshippers who visited the site supplicated to al-Maqah to grant them male children.

Another famous landmark bearing the name *Hrn* is Jabal Harrān, a mountain which lies in the Dhamār province. In fact, the inhabitants of the pastoral villages dotting its scenic foothills are often heard chanting an ancient hymn which, when transliterated into Arabic, goes something like this:

O, Dār Harrān! Most beautiful among corners!
Two pillars of silver and one of coral.
And a pillar from the reign of the Prophet Solomon[*].

It can be inferred, from various ancient Musnad texts, that *Hrn – Hārūn* was a deity specialized in granting male newborns, and that his worship was widespread in Yemen. He shared the same function with the Sabaic patron god al-Maqah (Makah). This brings to mind the fable of Abdul-Muṭṭalib, the legendary grandfather of the Prophet Muḥammad, and his vow to sacrifice his son, ʿAbdullah, in order for his remaining eleven children to survive and prosper. This is obviously a symbolic story written with the intention of deepening the understanding of the function of al-Maqah as being a deity who granted male children, as well as the consecration of the number "11".

On the other hand, we can find traces of the name *Hrn* in other regions of Yemen, besides Dhamār. For example, in the Laḥij governorate, there is a village called Harān Diyān, within the directorate of Tuban[36]. Similarly, there is a village called Harān in the directorate of Naham, in the Ṣanʿāʾ capital district[37].

From this exposition, we can conclude that the various names which feature in Exodus often do not designate historic figures, but are more likely symbolic titles, or anthropomorphized concepts. Just as "Moses" (*Mosheh*) was the embodiment of the Christ or Israelite Savior, "Aaron" (*Ahrn*) was the deity who bestowed male newborns; while the name *Miriam* was the incarnation of the Great Mother Goddess.

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36) See: Arabic Wikipedia (هران ديان (تبن

37) See: Arabic Wikipedia (هران (نهم

* Note the association of Solomon to the province of Dhamār, in the ethereal memory of the people of Yemen.

Such was the Night Journey, as told of in the Qur'ān, and the Exodus, as recounted in the Torah. The Israelites were saved by Moses, who took them out of their pagan bondage in Miṣrim to new holy places in the mountainous wilderness of South Arabia, where their god manifested for them.

We will now begin detailing the journeys of the Israelites, by exploring the various destinations they came upon, site by site, as can be gathered from the Old Testament (particularly the books of Exodus and Numbers). Only by walking in the very footsteps of the pilgrims, from the moment they departed Miṣrim, can we truly come to understand the nature and scope of the dilemma we are facing.

These are the **journeys** of the children of Israel, when they went out of the land of Miṣrim by their hosts, under the direction of Moses and Aaron. And Moses wrote their goings out according to their journeys by the commandment of Yhwh: and these are their **journeys** according to their goings out (Numbers 33: 1, 2).

The term *ms'y* (מסעי) / *ms'yhm* (מסעיהם), which appears in the original Hebrew scripture, was translated as "journeys" / "their journeys". This is further evidence that what the scripture describes is not merely an escape from "Pharaoh", or a mass migration that was undertaken as a single event, but rather a series of treks. Furthermore, the term *ms'y* is exactly identical to its Arabic counterpart of *sa'y* or *mas'a,* which is used by Muslims to describe the rituals conducted during the yearly Ḥajj season in Makkah. This eye-opening phenomenon means that the word has clear religious connotations, lending further credence to our view as to what the Exodus really was, at its core. The Israelites departed from Miṣrim on a mass ritual, as was ordained by Jehovah, in order to meet their Lord who had designated them as His chosen people. This historic event in the saga of the Israelites was nothing more than the ancient pilgrimage ritual whose tenets were set forth by Moses.

The Beginning: from Ta'iz towards Ibb

The Exodus began from a specific location which does not exist in any part of the world other than the territory of Ta'iz, in Yemen. Moreover, the other sites which the procession eventually reached are located within a specific

geographical region around the city of Taʿiz proper, known historically as *al-Maʿāfir.*

Here follows is the sequence of these sites, as specified in the Old Testament, followed by a brief description of each:

1 – And the children of Israel journeyed from **Ra'mss**, and encamped in **Sukkuth** (Numbers 33:5).

The name *Rʿmss* (רעמסס) contains all the phonetic elements of *Rʿmh* (רעמה). The binary root *Rʿ* was designative of a South Arabian and Egyptian deity, as we will soon reveal. The addition of the Ḥimyaritic vocal suffix *–m* (Rʿ – Rʿm) is also evident. In the Book of Ezekiel, Rʿmh appears in conjunction with ʿAdan and Sabaʾ:

The merchants of **Saba'** and **Ra'mh** traded with you. They gave the best of all sorts of spices and all sorts of stones of great price and gold for your goods. Haran, and Canneh, and **'Aden**, the merchants of Saba', Asshur, and Chilmad traded with you (Ezekiel 27: 22, 23).

It is generally agreed that the *–m* suffix appended to names and verbs in the dialect of Ḥimyar is an extinct definite article corresponding to the Arabic *al-* ; hence *Rʿm* (or *Raʿm*) can be represented as *al-Raʿ*. The existence of different versions of this name can be attributed to its various pronunciations in Yemenite Hebrew. For instance, in the Hebrew spoken around Taʿiz, the name is feminized by adding the *–h* suffix (Rʿm – Rʿmh), whereas the superfluous *–s* is appended to the name in Ḥaḍramaic Hebrew (Rʿm – Rʿms). This linguistic input is crucial for a more thorough and deeper understanding of the scripture.

It can be inferred, from various ancient Musnad inscriptions, that the temples of Raʿ – Raʿm – Raʿmh – Raʿms were quite widespread around Yemen, with some located in regions as far-flung as Ḥaḍramawt. Today, we can find a trace of the name in the Ibb governorate, within the Yarīm district, and specifically the isolation of Bani ʿUmar, in the shape of a village called Mīdān Raʿāʿ[38]. In the same province, within the directorate of Mudhaykhirah, we can also encounter a site which brings to memory the story of the Exodus: Wādī Mūsa[39].

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38) See: Arabic Wikipedia (يريم) ميدان رعا

39) See: Arabic Wikipedia (مذيخرة) وادي موسى

It would appear, from the way the name *Raʿmss* was recorded, that the original Hebrew text was inscribed by one of the Jewish priests of Ḥaḍramawt, who were known for adding the *–s* suffix to proper nouns. More so, they often replaced certain dialectical marks by duplicating the last letter in names, hence: *Raʿms – Raʿmss*.

In the references and records on Yemeni genealogy, the region known as *Mikhlāf al-Rāʿī* was named after the legendary figure of Rāʿ ibn Sayyār ibn Muʿāwiyah ibn Sayf ibn al-Ḥārith ibn Marhibah ibn Bakīl. It is located within the Khūlān directorate of the Ṣanʿāʾ province[40].

What is perhaps most relevant about the passage in Numbers which describes the start of the Exodus is its assertion that the journeys began in a particular place called *Sukkuth*. In the original Hebrew text, the name is spelled *Skth* (סכת), using the Samekh letter, rather than the Shin (*s* or *sh*). We can identify this place today in the Taʿiz province, within the directorate of Māwiyah, as the village of al-Sukūt[41]. It lies a stone's throw from the border of Laḥij.

The name S-k-t is very old. It refers to a South Arabian deity mentioned in the Sabaic inscriptions as *Mskt,* along with another idol called *Yth.* These two deities lent their names to the temples of Maskūt and Yath, whose ruins can be found in the province of Maʾrib, in the vicinity of the temple of Barʾān. This confirms that at some point in Yemen's history, the cult of Maskūt – Sukūt spread to other areas of the country, alongside al-Maqah, the chief deity of the Sabaic pantheon.

Here follows are two examples of Yemeni artifacts featuring the name *Maskut*:

- **Inscription "DAI Barʾān 2000-1"**

This is a dedicatory inscription carved on the base of a statue, dating from the Middle Sabaic era. It was discovered in the year 2000, by a team of German archeologists undertaking some excavations in Maʾrib. The first four lines of the engraving read:

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40) See: Arabic Wikipedia (صنعاء) عزلة بني الراعي

41) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=71550

1 {(S²)[ʿrm ʾwt]r mlk Sbʾ [w-ḏ]
2 Rydn [bn ʿlh]n Nhfn mlk[S¹]—
3 [b](ʾ) hqny ʾlmqh bʿl **Ms¹kt** w-(Yṯ)[w] (B)[r]—
4 [ʾn ṣlm](n)[... ...]

To paraphrase, the inscription commemorates Shaʿrm Awtr, king of Sabaʾ and dhū-Raydān, son of ʿAlhn Nhfn, who dedicated the statue to al-Maqah Lord of **Mskut** and Yath.

- **Inscription "CIH 314 + CIH 954"**

This is another memorial glyph originally discovered at the ancient site of Barʾān, in Maʾrib. It has been divided into two fragments, the first currently on display at the Louvre Museum in France, and the second at the Museum of Bombay, India. The inscription was made by a trio of warrior-chiefs from the tribe of *Bklm* (Bakīl), who were under the service of Īl-Sharḥ Yaḥḍab and his brother Yʾzl Bayn, the king of Sabaʾ and dhū-Raydān, and who also dedicated two bronze statues to al-Maqah, Lord of the temples of Mskut and Yath.

Photo 9: Inscription "CIH 314 + CIH 954"
(Source: Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions)

From a geographic perspective, this would indicate that the pilgrims set off from the Māwiyah district of Taʿiz, where the village of Sukūt is situated, and headed towards the wilderness along the border of Laḥij, leaving Miṣrim behind them.

2 – And they departed from Sukkuth, and encamped in **Athm**, which is in the edge of the wilderness (Numbers 33:6).

According to the above, the procession marched forth from the directorate of Māwiyah, in Taʿiz, towards the isolation known as *al-Duʿaysah*, wherein lies the hamlet of Shiʿab Tāmah[42]. The name *Tāmah* is the feminized form of Tām. In the Hebrew scripture, it appears as *Athm* (אתם), and could be correctly read *al-Tām* (or *al-Tāmah)* in Arabic, by adding the definite article to it. As for the term *Shiʿab,* it designates the place as a river valley, or – more precisely – a tributary of a large and deep natural basin in a mountainous territory.

3 – And they departed from Athm, and turned back unto **Phi-Haḥiruth**, which is before **Baʿl-Ṣaphun**. And they encamped before **Magdul** (Numbers 33:7).

The Biblical name Migdol actually occurs as *Mgdl* (מגדל) in the original Hebrew text. It is identifiable today as *al-Majdalah*[43] (feminized), a hamlet situated within the Taʿziyah directorate of Taʿiz, which shares borders with Māwiyah, where the journeys started.

As for Ṣaphun (צפון), it is none other than *Ṣafūnah* (again, note the feminization of the name in Arabic), a village which lies in the neighboring directorate of Maqbanah, within the isolation of Banī Ḥimyar[44]. In that same geographical space, we can also find the Biblical name *ha-Ḥirth* (החירת) in the feminized form of *al-Ḥarthiyah*, which designates a village situated in the isolation of al-Shiʿūbah, in the Maʿāfir directorate of Taʿiz[45].

The name *Ḥarth* is mentioned in the Victory Stele of the last great Makrib of Saba', Karb-Īl Watr ibn Dhamār ʿAli, which was inscribed around the year 650 BC (very close to the time when the early books of the Old Testament were penned), where it features as *Ḥarthw*. Archeologists are well aware of the Stele, which was discovered near the ruins of Ṣirwāḥ, in the Maʾrib province, and designated "RES 3945". It details the decisive victories of Karb-Īl Watr against a large alliance of tribes, from Najrān in the north to Awsān in the south, which led to the unification of western and central Yemen under his rule. Apparently,

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42) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=83703
43) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=83840
44) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=37876
45) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=84745

Karb captured of Ḥarthū[46], along with its neighboring villages, mountains, valleys and pastures, all the way to the seacoast (the Gulf of Aden).

In the coming sections, we will demonstrate how the priests and scribes of ancient Israel attributed to their small, religious fiefdom all the triumphs of the Sabaic monarch Karb-Īl Watr, upon whose character they based the legend of King Saul, the conqueror of Canaan.

The reign of Karb-Īl Watr began with him bearing the title "Makrib"; however, he soon changed it to "King", after relinquishing his religious authority to the high-priests of the various *mikhlāfs* he brought under his rule. His name is mentioned in an Assyrian inscription dating back to around 685 BC, which tells of gifts sent by one *Karibi-Ilu* to appease King Sennacherib[47].

Karb-Īl spent much of his reign as a warrior, following in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor Yathaʿ-Amr Bayn[*], in the conquest of the fiefdoms that were under the control of Maʿīn Miṣrn, especially in Southern Yemen. Karb-Īl succeeded in subjugating these domains and uniting them under the throne of Saba', as is stated in the famous Victory Stele.

4 – And Moses led Israel onward from **Yam Suph**, and they went out into the wilderness of **Shur**; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water (Exodus 15:22).

It would appear that Moses led his people from Majdal – Majdalah, which lies in the directorate of al-Taʿziah, northwards to the Shūr mountain range. After traveling across arid territory for three days, they finally entered another isolation abundant with water.

The name *Yam Suph* (ים סוף) has been inaccurately translated as "Red Sea". This is at best an arbitrary understanding, because the term *yam* can just as soon refer

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46) The inscription "RES 3945" can be explored further through the following link:
http://dasi.cnr.it/index.php?id=dasi_prj_epi&prjId=1&corId=0&colId=0&navId=774409698&recId=7349

The town of Ḥarthū (the *Ḥirth* of the Bible) is listed in the ninth line of the engraving.

47) See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karibi-ilu

* Yathaʿ Amr is also mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions, where his name appears as *Ita Amru*.

to an inland basin, inlet, or watercourse in general, and not necessarily a sea. Thus, the Shūr mountain range, which the scripture describes as being a "wilderness".

We can find Sūph today within a famous highland isolation situated in the dhi-Safāl directorate, called *'Uzlat al-Sayf*[48]. The place is geographically linked to a chain of mountains called *Mashūrah*[49], which extends within the Ibb province, specifically the Ḥubaysh directorate. These mountains are famous for their ancient ruins, which partly overlook the Siyāni Valley.

If we follow in the footsteps of the pilgrims, we will indeed have to march for about three days before we cross the Mashūrah[*] range. Thus, the itinerary described in the Bible paints an accurate picture of the geography of the Exodus: the Israelites left Majdalah, trudged through the wilderness, passing by the waters of al-Sayf (Yam Suph), and came upon the Mashūrah Mountains (Shur), which they paralleled for three days, before finally reaching their next site.

Photo 10: Bronze statue of the Yemeni king Karb-Il Watr bin Dhamār 'Ali, the last of the Makribs of Saba' and maker of its victories, whom the Torah imagined as King Saul (on display at the Ṣan'ā' Museum)

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48) https://www.geonames.org/8735467/as-sayf.html

49) See: Arabic Wikipedia (مشورة (إب

* Note how the name is feminized in Arabic (Shūr – Shūrah), and how the Himyaritic *m-* prefix found its way into the name (Mshūrah) – a relic of an ancient vocal tradition.

Photo 11: Scenery from the Mashūrah Mountains of Ibb
(Source: **https://artravelers.com/c/384100**)

5 – And when they had traveled for three days in the wilderness of Athm, they camped at **Marah** (Numbers 33:8).

Marah is located in the Ibb province, specifically the directorate of al-ʿUdayn, and within the mountain isolation of Jabal Baḥrī. There, we can find the hamlets of al-Rajmah and al-Marīrah[50]. This means that the pilgrims spent three days in the Mashūrah mountain strip, which joins the directorate of al-Siyāni with al-ʿUdayn. It is worth noting that according to the Torah, the place was given the name *Marah* due to the bitterness of its streams.

And they came to Marah, and could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore the name of it was called Marah (Exodus 15:23).

The Arabic version of the name, *Marīrah*, literally means "a thing or place that is bitter". Could this be merely another coincidence?

6 – And they journeyed from Marah, and came unto **Aylmh**: and in Aylmh were twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm-trees; and they encamped there (Numbers 33:9).

Closer scrutiny of the Hebrew name *Aylmh* (אילמה) will reveal that it was also recorded in the masculine form of Aylm (אילמ). It is situated within the Ḥazm al-ʿUdayn directorate of the province of Ibb, where it coincides with the small hamlet of Biʾr al-Līmah[51].

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50) See: Arabic Wikipedia (العدين) المريره السفلى

51) See: Arabic Wikipedia (حزم العدين) بير الليمة

Indeed, any traveler who reaches the directorate of al-'Udayn in Ibb can have direct access to Shar'ab al-Salām, as the two territories share borders and together comprise an integrated natural and religious domain, as we will demonstrate hereafter.

The Sanctification of New Sites: Shar'ab al-Salām and its Environs

In the previous section, we established that the convoy of pilgrims arrived at Shar'ab al-Salām. It is precisely this part of the holy land that would – after the founding of Israel as a monarchy, some four centuries later – constitute the geographical domain surrounding the religious capital, Jerusalem.

At this point, we will reveal to the reader, for the first time, the true general location of ancient Jerusalem in Yemen. Due to the abundance of details required in this regard, we will pinpoint its coordinates in the upcoming books of this volume. For now, it will suffice to mention that the domain in question links Shar'ab al-Salām with its neighbor, Shar'ab al-Rawnah, and the 'Udayn directorate of Ibb. It is also worth noting that the new administrative division of Yemen has retained a vestigial trace of the name *Yrushlm* (ירושלם) in the form of *al-Salām*. In the upcoming books of the series **Imagined Israel**, we will present scientific evidence and extensive data regarding this exciting theory.

Upon reaching the hallowed territory, the pilgrims rested for a time before setting off once again on a new pilgrimage season, to sanctify new places in which Jehovah would manifest.

Here follows is another sequence of the sites visited by the Israelites:

1 – And they journeyed from **Yam Suph**, and encamped in the wilderness of **Sin** (Numbers 33:11).

The mountain isolation of Sin (סין) – not the Sinai of Egypt, obviously – lies in the vicinity of the small sector of Ṣabr al-Mawādim, where it can be identified as a thorp called *al-Sīnah*[52] – bearing in mind that the Jews of the region in question tended to feminize place names in their dialect.

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52) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=78505

2 – And they journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, and encamped in **Duphqah**. (Numbers 33:12).

The Hebrew word *dfqh* literally means "beating or striking". In the original text, it does indeed feature as a proper noun, although the English translations of the scripture inaccurately rendered it as *Dophkah*. The actual name (דפקה) is spelled with the *Qoph* (q) letter, not the *Kaph* (k). Although the translators of the Hebrew text recognized it as the name of a place – notwithstanding this error – it is clear that, with the extinction of the Hebrew dialect, which only a small number of Yemenis still speak to this day, the inhabitants of the area replaced the name *Daphqah – Dophqah* with its **literal** Arabic counterpart: *al-Ḍarbah.*

Because this unique name cannot be found anywhere other than in the Ibb governorate of Yemen, and precisely within the directorate of Dhil-Safāl, wherein lies the village of al-Ḍarbah[53], this would indicate that the procession headed northwards from Ṣabr al-Mawādim towards the borders of Ibb, where they entered another mountain seclusion, through which passes the river valley (waters) of al-Wash.

3 – And they departed from Duphqah, and encamped in **Alush** (Numbers 33:13).

As such, the pilgrims left the wilderness around al-Sīnah, within the directorate of Ṣabr al-Mawādim, which shares borders with Shar'ab al-Salām, and made for the southern reaches of the Ibb governorate, wherein lies Wādi Wash[54]. Again, this is a name that is unique to the directorate of al-Sīyāni, where it designates both a village and a valley. These neighboring directorates constitute one geographical domain characterized by fertile mountain ranges and abundant river basins.

4 – And they departed from Alush, and encamped at **Raphidim**, where there was no water for the people to drink (Numbers 33:14).

The above passage tells us that the Israelites left Wādi Wash behind them and eventually found themselves in a relatively water-scarce area called *Raphd – al-Raphd* (the *–im* suffix in Hebrew is used to denote the dual or the plural).

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53) See: Arabic Wikipedia (الضربة (ذي السفال)

54) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=24587

Incidentally the place known as *al-Marfad*[55] can be located today within the directorate of al-Taʿziah, along the eastern border of the Taʿiz province.

According to the sequence of sites described in the Biblical text, the procession would have traveled from Sharʿab al-Salām and Sharʿab al-Rawnah into Ṣabr al-Mawādim, and from there northwards into the directorates of Dhil-Safāl and al-Sīyāni.

5 – And they departed from Raphidim and camped in the wilderness of **Sini** (Numbers 33:15).

After a temporary respite, the pilgrims set off anew and traversed a particular place which the text names *Sini* (סיני). This name is obviously distinct from *Sin* (סין), which appears in a previous passage. By tracing this path onto the geography of Yemen, the only viable conclusion would be that the convoy made its way towards Ṣīnah, a locality within the isolation of al-Mudhaffar, in the Taʿiz governorate[56]. It is worth mentioning here that al-Mudhaffar has today become a directorate in of itself, and shares borders with Ṣabr al-Mawādim to the north-east. This means that the pilgrims returned once again to the point from which they had started.

6 – And they departed from the wilderness of Sini, and encamped at **Qabruth Hthawah** (Numbers 33:16).

The name *h-Thawah* (or *ha-Thwah*) is truly unique in its etymological construction, and it most certainly does not designate a site that is anywhere near the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt. As we demonstrated previously, the name pertains to the temple of Riyām, located in a religious city called *Atwah,* which features as *Atwtm* in the ancient Musnad inscriptions unearthed in South Arabia.

We also elaborated earlier on the relation between *Riyām* and *Miryam*. The name in question was, at a certain point in history, transferred to the Arḥab region, north of the Yemeni capital, Ṣanʿāʾ, centuries after the original site was sanctified by Moses and the Israelites. In that particular place, where Moses buried the dead after the wrath of Jehovah, we can find the site al-Muqaybirah,

55) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=83835
56) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=83273

a locality within the isolation of al-Uḫjūr, in Sharʿab al-Salām[57]. This is the same *Qabruth* of the Torah.

It would appear that the sacred status acquired by the site of Atwah, in connection with Ta'leb Riyām, aided in propagating his temples throughout Yemen. This holy mountain is well-known to archeologists, and its name has been associated with the tribe of Samʿī, whose ancestors venerated that deity.

From the above Biblical passage, we can postulate that the convoy left al-Ṣīnah, in the directorate of al-Mudhaffar, and trekked towards Sharʿab al-Salām, where the pilgrims rested at al-Muqaybirah. The latter, as its name clearly suggests, is a burial ground where the Israelites interred their dead after the conflict between Miriam and Moses, as a consequence of his marriage to a pagan Cushite woman.

7 – And they departed from Qabruth Hthawah, and encamped at **Ḥaṣruth** (Numbers 33:17).

Thus, at the end of the ceremony and religious rites, and after another rest, the procession left one of the hamlets of Sharʿab al-Salām and entered another mountain isolation *('uzlat)*, identified as follows: Taʿiz governorate, directorate of Sharʿab al-Rawnah, 'Uzlat al-Ajshūb, village of Dār al-Ḥaḍīr[58]. The Hebrew equivalent of the name *Ḥaḍīr* can be *Ḥaṣir* or *Ḥaṣirūt* (in the English translations: Hazeroth), being that the modern dialect does not vocalize the Arabic *Ḍād* letter. The rendering of place names by adding the *–ut* suffix is a very common phenomenon in South Arabia. To state some examples of regions or towns whose names bear a similar construction: Ḍabūt, Raysūt, Barhūt, and Ḥaḍramūt.

8 – And they departed from Ḥaṣruth, and encamped in **Rathmah** (Numbers 33:18).

The Hebrew word *rthmh* (רתמה), which can be correctly articulated as either *rathmah* or *rithmah*, means "bridle" or "reign" (as that of a horse or camel). The Arabic equivalent of the term is *lajm*. It would appear that the inhabitants of this particular region of Yemen retained a vestigial trace of that name, in its Arabic

57) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=72518
58) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=74131

form, since the old Hebrew version became extinct. Today, we can locate this same place as follows: directorate of Ṣabr al-Mawādim, ʿUzlat al-ʿAdnah, village of al-Lajm[59]. Although the Hebrew version of the name (*Rathm – Rathmah*) eventually disappeared, it re-emerged elsewhere, in the Ṣanʿāʾ governorate, where the village of Rathm[60] still exists today.

9 – And they departed from Rathmah, and encamped at **Rammun-Pharaṣ** (Numbers 33:19).

It is worth reminding the reader at this point that the Hebrew text is devoid of commas, and the place names listed within it sometimes appear to be composites. One such as example is *Rammun-Pharaṣ*. In our view, these are actually two distinct sites, Rammun (or Rimmun) and Pharaṣ, both of which can be found today within the governorate of Taʿiz, at a stone's throw from each other. Rammun (רמן) is identifiable as the locality of al-Rummānah, within the isolation of Bani Samīʿ, in the directorate of Sharʿab al-Rawnah[61]. As for Pharaṣ (פרץ), it is none other than the village of al-Farīṣah, in the neighboring directorate of Maqbanah[62] (once again, note the tendency to feminize the place name: Farīṣ – Farīṣah).

10 – And they departed from Rimmun-Pharaṣ, and encamped at **Labnah** (Numbers 33:20).

The procession doubled back to the directorate of Ṣabr al-Mawādim and entered Labnah (לבנה), a site known today as *Shaʿb al-Labān*[63].

11 – And they journeyed from Libnah, and encamped at **Rassah** (Numbers 33:21).

After stopping at *Lbn – Labnah*, the pilgrims entered another mountain isolation (*ʿuzlah*), where they took a respite at Rassah. We can pinpoint this place also within the Taʿiz governorate, as follows: directorate of al-Misrākh, ʿUzlat al-Uqrūd, village of Rās al-Naqīl[64]. Interestingly, the word *naqīl* is an authentic Yemeni term which designates the temporary residence of a wandering, nomadic tribe. Its root is *n-q-l,* which means "transport", "ferry", or "migrate".

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59) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=38322

60) See: Arabic Wikipedia (رثم (أرحب) ; and https://www.yr.no/place/Yemen/Sanaa/Ratham/data.html

61) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=74293

62) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=74762

63) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=78474

64) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=78961

12 – And they journeyed from Rassah, and encamped in **Qahlathah** (Numbers 33:22).

From al-Misrākh, the pilgrims took the road towards the Maʿāfir region, where they entered another mountain isolation, namely Qalāt – Qahlāt*. This place is located in the directorate of al-Maʿāfir, specifically within ʿUzlat al-Sawā', where it can be identified today as *al-Qalāt*[65].

13 – And they went on from Qahlathah, and encamped in Mount Shepher. And they went on from Mount Shapher, and put up their tents in **Ḥardah** (Numbers 33:23, 24).

From the directorate of Maqbanah, the pilgrims returned once again to Sharʿab al-Salām, where they camped at a site whose name features as *Ḥrdh* (הרדה) in the original Hebrew text. This is a locality within the village of al-Shiʿūbah, in ʿUzlat ʿAzbān, known today as *al-Ḥarīd*[66].

14 – They journeyed from Ḥardah, and encamped in **Maqhalath** (Numbers 33:25).

The trek continued with the convoy taking the sacred road from Sharʿab al-Salām back to Ṣabr al-Mawādim, where the pilgrims rested in a place called *Mqhlt* (מקהלת). The latter is situated in ʿUzlat Bardād, and can be identified today as al-Maqhāyah, a locality within the village of al-Dhahrah[67].

15 – And they went on from Maqhalath, and put up their tents in **Taḥath** (Numbers 33:26).

The Hebrew term *tḥth* (תחת) means "under" or "lower". As such, the pilgrims took off from Ṣabr al-Mawādim towards the directorate of al-Taʿziah, and eventually reached the mountain sanctuary which today bears the Arabic version of that same Biblical name: al-Shaʿbāniyah al-Sufla[68]. The word *sufla* literally means "lower".

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65) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=84549

66) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=73267

67) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=77809

68) See: Arabic Wikipedia (تعز) عزلة الشعبانية السفلى

* Note the tendency to insert the *h* letter in the middle of the South Arabian nouns (both common and proper), whereby *Qalāt* becomes *Qahlāt*. This is comparable to *Abram – Abrahm*, *Shamar Yarʿsh – Shamar Yahrʿsh* and *Yashaʿ – Yahshaʿ* (Yeshua – Yehoshua). We will encounter this phenomenon many times later in the series, where we disscuss the history of the Sabaic monarchs.

16 – And they departed from Taḥath, and encamped at **Taraḥ** (Numbers 33:27).

The pilgrims retraced their steps and headed towards the directorate of Farʿ al-ʿUdayn, in Ibb, where they made their way to ʿUzlat al-Wazīrah, and stopped at the village of al-Rāhidah, specifically the locality of al-Rāḥah[69]. Note that *Tāraḥ* is in fact a South Arabian name which exhibits the *t-* prefix, an extinct Sabaic pronoun article that later evolved into *al-* in Arabic. Hence *Tāraḥ* and *al-Rāḥ* (feminized: *al-Rāḥah*) are technically the same.

17 – And they departed from Taraḥ, and encamped at Mathqah. And they went from Mathqah, and encamped at **Ḥashmunah** (Numbers 33:28, 29).

The directorate of Sharʿab al-Rawnah was known historically as *Mikhlāf Ḥashm*[*]. In the books on ancient Yemeni lineages, this name can be traced back to the legendary figure of Sharʿab ibn Ḥashm ibn ʿAbd Shams. The Mikhlāf is an expansive and very fertile territory, famous for its lofty fortresses and steep, rocky formations. The isolation called ʿUzlat Bani Ḥusām[70] can still be found today within Sharʿab al-Rawnah, along the Ibb – Taʿiz border.

18 – And they departed Ḥashmunah and encamped in **Masruth** (Numbers 33:30).

The orientalist Arabic translations of the above passage rendered the name *Masruth* (מסרות) as *Mashirut*. This is an inaccurate representation, as the original Hebrew scripture records the name with the *Samek* letter, not the *Shin* (or *Sin*). From a purely linguistic perspective, the *Samek* letter (ס) is supposed to be vocalized as a mixture of three sounds: *s, ṣ,* and *z.* Being that this letter is not found in the Arabic alphabet, the correct parallel rendering of the name could be either *Masrūt – Maṣrūt* or, alternatively, *al-Sarūt – al-Ṣarūt.* It is our view that the name also designates the ancient Yemeni tribe of Bani Surt, remnants of which can still be found in certain isolated pockets of Sharʿab al-Salām.

19 – And they departed from Masruth, and encamped in **Bani-Yaʿqan** (Numbers 33:31).

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69) See: Arabic Wikipedia (الراحة (فرع العدين)

70) See: Arabic Wikipedia (عزلة بني الحسام (تعز)

* Again, note the South Arabian construction *Ḥashm – Ḥashmūn* (or *Ḥasm – Ḥasmūn*), which found its way into the Hebrew text.

The convoy carved a path towards the directorate of al-Misrākh, in Taʿiz, and reached the domain of Bani Yʿqān. This latter name belongs to the village of ʿAqan, within ʿUzlat Watīr[71]. The *y-* prefix in the name *Yʿqan* is superfluous, hence not vocalized in speech (*ʿAqn – Yʿqn*, as in *Karb – Yakrib*).

20 – And they journeyed from Bani-Yaʿqan, and encamped in **Mount ha-Gadgad** (Numbers 33:32).

The name *Gdgd* (גדגד) is vocalized as *Jadjad* by the inhabitants of the highlands bordering Ibb and Taʿiz. This is actually a locality within the mountain village of Jamash, which lies in the directorate of al-Qafr[72].

21 – And they journeyed from Mount ha-Gadgad, and encamped in **Yaṭbathah**. And they journeyed from Yaṭbathah, and encamped in **ʿAbrunah** (Numbers 33:33, 34).

Tracing this itinerary onto the geography of Yemen, the convoy would have entered ʿUzlat Bani Ḥammād, in the directorate of al-Mawāsiṭ, where lies al-ʿAbr, a locality within the village of al-Jibāl[73]. It is worth noting that in the neighboring isolation of al-Ayfūʿ, there lies another village whose name bears a vestigial trace of the Biblical prophet Neḥemiah: the village of Naḥmah[74]. As for Yaṭbathah, it can be identified as the locality of Kadrat al-Ṭayyib[75], within ʿUzlat Sharjab, an isolation situated in the directorate of al-Shamāyatayn.

22 – And they departed from ʿAbrunah, and encamped at **ʿAṣiun-Gabar** (Numbers 33:35).

As the convoy entered the district known today as *al-Mawāsiṭ*, it approached ʿAṣiūn and Jābir, which are actually two distinct and neighboring sites. The name *ʿAṣiūn* (or *Ezion* – as it occurs in the English translations) can be found within the directorate of Jabal Ḥabshi, in the isolation of al-Marātibah, where it coincides with the village of ʿAṣwān[76]. As for Bani Jābir, it lies in the adjacent directorate of al-Mawāsiṭ, within ʿUzlat al-Ayfūʾ[77].

71) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=38381
72) See: Arabic Wikipedia (الجدجد (القفر
73) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=85801
74) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=86475
75) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=80681
76) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=38176
77) See: Arabic Wikipedia (بني جابر (تعز

23 – And they journeyed from ʿAṣiun-Gabar, and encamped in the wilderness of **Ṣan**, which is **Qadash** (Numbers 33:36).

The procession made its way to the blessed mountain called *Qadash*, which was to be sanctified by Moses and the people of Israel. On their way to their destination, they passed through the isolation of al-Ṣanah[78], which lies within the Maʿāfir directorate of Taʿiz, and which connects to the famous mountain called Qadas[79] by an ancient pilgrimage route.

24 – And they journeyed from Qadash, and encamped in **Mount Har**, at the border of the land of **Adum** (Numbers 33:37).

The Hebrew word *har* means "mountain". As such, the above passage refers to the convoy moving to a highland isolation actually bearing the name *Har* (a proper noun in this context, which is alternatively vocalized as *Hur*). We can pinpoint this place in Yemen, as follows: directorate of al-Mawāsiṭ, ʿUzlat Bani Ḥammād, village of Bani Samīʿ, locality of al-Jabal[80]. The Arabic term *jabal* also means "mountain", whereas the definitive article *al-* corresponds to the Hebrew *ha-* prefix; hence *ha-Har* and *al-Jabal* are exact matches. Is it by pure coincidence that the term also happens to be a proper noun in Arabic, and designative of a particular site? In the same directorate lies the isolation of ʿUzlat Bani Yūsif, in which we can find the village of al-Dūm[81]. This is the site which the pilgrims reached after having sanctified Mount Qadas. It is, without a doubt, the Biblical Adum (אדום).

This has been, in all scientific objectivity, our honest understanding of the route taken by the Children of Israel, and without the slightest manipulation. What is truly eye-opening about this discovery is that the pilgrims did in fact return to the holy site of Qadas and its environs, in the end. This confirms our hypothesis that the journey was indeed a pilgrimage, wherein the Israelites roamed a series of mountains and valleys in different areas, for the purpose of sanctifying them, before returning to the site from whence they had set off.

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78) See: Arabic Wikipedia (عزلة الصنة (تعز
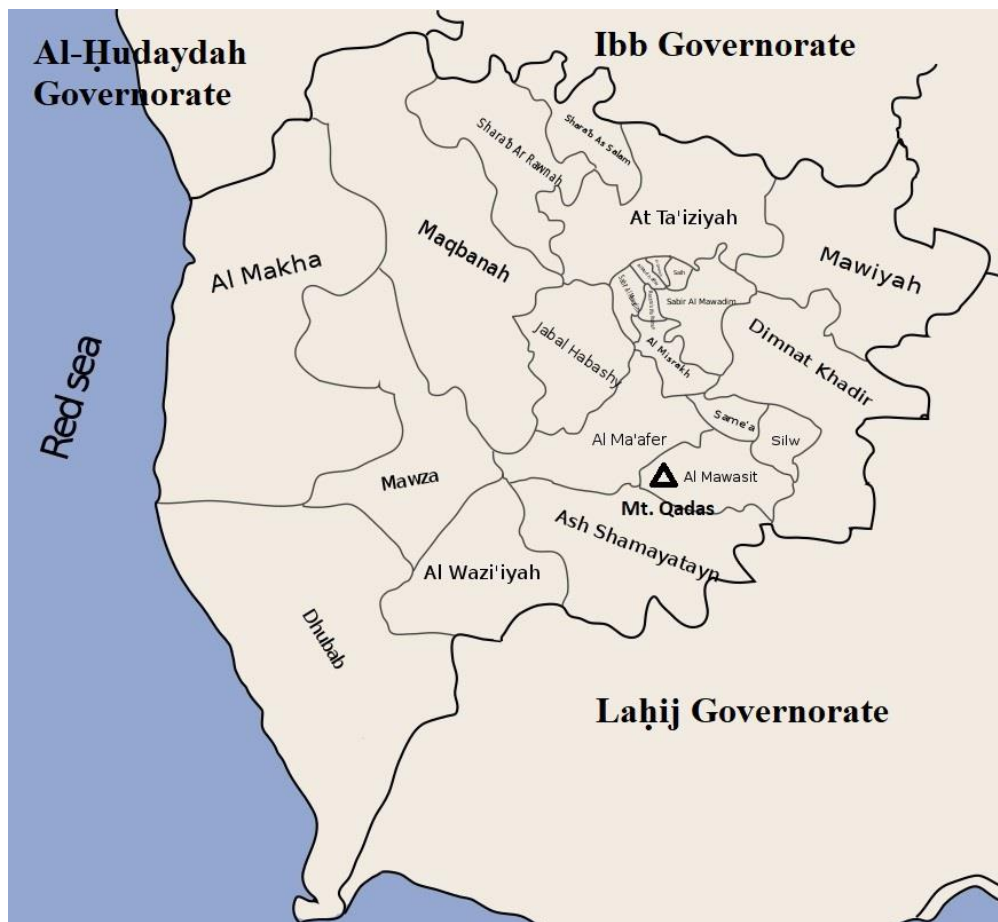
79) https://peakvisor.com/peak/jabal-qadas.html and https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Qadas_(Taiz)

80) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=85915

81) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=86189

To better visualize the proximity of most of these locations, and their relation to Qadas, the reader can consult the map below.

Map 8: Governorate of Taʿiz, encompassing some of the sites of the Israelite pilgrimage

It follows then that there was no error on the part of the original scribes of the text, which supposedly led to a mix-up in their recording of the site names, as some Biblical analysts and critics have postulated. Rather, the mistake lay in the orientalist reading of these names, and in their arbitrary projection onto the geography of Egypt and Palestine.

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CHAPTER FOUR

THE SECOND EXODUS

Throughout the previous chapters, we showed that the Exodus was a religious journey organized for the purpose of celebrating the special and individual deity of a nomadic, pastoral community, whose members believed that their Lord had chosen them as His people, from among other tribal groups. Our hypothesis is further cemented once we realize that another, similar journey actually occurred after Aaron's death. This can only mean that the "Second Exodus" was a continuation of the first journey and a revival of its ritualistic aspect.

The text describing the post-Aaronic journey lists new sites and geographical landmarks not mentioned in the previous passages we analyzed. It is therefore illogical to assume that the sole motive for these arduous excursions was to escape persecution at the hands of Pharaoh, even forty years after the community's initial mass migration from the tyrant's domain. Therefore, the Israelites' travels to these new places, after the death of their priest Aaron, cannot be described as aimless wanderings in a desert, nor can they be viewed as merely being part of an active search for their Promised Land.

And Aaron the priest went up into Mount Har at the commandment of Yhwh, and died there, in the fortieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Miṣrim, in the fifth month, on the first day of the month. And Aaron was a hundred and twenty and three years old when he died in Mount Har. And news of the coming of the Children of Israel came to the king of **ʿArad**, the Canaanite, who was living in the South, in the land of Canaan (Numbers 33: 38 – 40).

The only logical approach to these (and other) relevant passages in the Book of Numbers is to analyze them on the basis that they are chronicles documenting a continuous, yearly pilgrimage.

The first thing to note in this regard is that the second part of the above text contains another astonishing revelation: it mentions a location called *ʿArad* (ערד), whose king heard of the passage of the Israelites. In fact, on the slopes of these mountains, within the directorate of Sharʿab al-Rawnah, there is the isolation of ʿUzlat Sharqiy Ḥimyar, wherein we can find the locality of Naqīl ʿArad[82]. Being that a large part of Taʿiz, whose territory belonged to the historic al-Maʿāfir district, was one of the prominent regions of Maʿīn Miṣrn (the *Miṣrim* of Yemen), it can be safely assumed that there was a tribal king or chief

82) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=72970

who reigned over a small geographic domain (*mikhlāf*) called *'Arad*, whose name features in the Torah. This pagan chief, who was a Minaean (or *Canaanite,* as per the Biblical designation), must have heard of the death of the great Israelite priest Aaron, and felt a certain measure of trepidation at the sight of the large procession of pilgrims, including women and children, passing through his territory with their livestock, laden with luggage.

On this occasion, we would emphasize that the geographical space in which these sites are located did not – at the time the scripture was recorded – necessarily comprise or recognize the names of the directorates as they are known today. For instance, until recently, the governorates of Ibb and Ta'iz were actually one province, before modern administrative divisions separated them. What this means, essentially, is that it is quite possible to find one particular site within the boundaries of Ibb, or within a specific directorate thereof, while the very next or subsequent site listed in the Biblical itinerary could be within Ta'iz. This is perfectly normal, and does not imply any errors in the geographical arrangement we are postulating. However, irrespective of the provincial or directorate divisions, the very names of many of the individual tows, villages, hamlets and natural landmarks mentioned in the Old Testament scripture are still in use today, and have remained unchanged – or at best slightly altered or literally translated into their Arabic counterparts – for over two millenniums.

Did Another Exodus Occur after Aaron's Death?

Having established the geographical framework of the Biblical narrative, we can now begin by dismantling and reconstructing the legend of the Exodus from a new and different perspective, starting with the following passage:

1 – And they departed from Mount Har, and encamped in **Ṣalmunah** (Numbers 33:41).

In the ancient Sabaic and Ḥimyaritic dialects of South Arabia, the word *ṣlm* means "statue". It appears in hundreds of dedicatory Musnad inscriptions which speak of bronze statuettes (*ṣlmn*) offered as gifts to al-Maqah or to other deities venerated throughout the region. The Arabic equivalent of this term is *ṣanam,* while the Hebrew rendering would be *ṣlmwn* (feminized: *ṣlmwnh*). The site

bearing the name of *al-Ṣanmah,* which was the pilgrims' first stop after their departure from Har, is a village we can locate today in the directorate of al-Wāziʿiyyah, in the southern highlands of Taʿiz[83].

This would mean that shortly after Aaron's death, the procession of pilgrims infiltrated the border region separating the governorates of Taʿiz and Laḥij. The original Hebrew version of the name *Ṣanmah* apparently found its way further north to Yemen's capital district at some point, as we can still find it within the governorate of Ṣanʿāʾ, and specifically the directorate of al-Manākhah, where it designates the locality of al-Ṣalm[84].

2 – And they departed from Ṣalmunah, and encamped in **Phunun** (Numbers 33:42).

There is not, anywhere in the world, a place called *Phunun* (פונן), except the Laḥij governorate of Yemen. The name designates the locality of al-Funūnah, within the village of al-Jawḥarah, which lies in the directorate of al-Maqāṭirah[85]. As such, the procession of pilgrims would have left the directorate of al-Mawāsiṭ, in Taʿiz, made its way towards al-Wāziʿiyyah, before delving further south across the borders of Laḥij, about 40 kilometers from the coast of the Gulf of ʿAdan.

Another interesting fact worth considering is that Funūn – Funūnah features in the Musnad inscription "RES 3945", which commemorates the exploits of Karb-Īl Watr, where it appears as *Fnnn.* The inscription lists it as one of the towns that incurred the wrathful retribution of the great Makrib of Sabaʾ around 680 BC (as commonly estimated).

Below is a fragment of the inscription (line 18), followed by its official English transliteration:

{w-ywm mḫḍ S¹bl w-Hrm w-Fnnn w-hbʿl kl mnhy-hmw w-wfṭ ʾhgr S¹bl w-ʾhgr Hrm w-ʾhgr **Fnnn** w-hrg-hmw s²lṯt ʾlfm /3000/ w-hrg ʾmlk-hmw w-s¹by-hmw ḫms¹t ʾlfm /5000/ w-ṯll bʿr-hmw ḫms¹y w-mʾt ʾlfm /150000/ w-bḍʿ b-ʿl-hmw s³lʾm l-ʾlmqh w-l S¹bʾ w-nqm yhqm ḫr S¹bʾ w-Ḍhr ḏ-ʾmnt Krb—

83) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=82248
84) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=3504
85) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=52815

English translation: *And then, when he broke S¹bl and Hrm and **Fnnn*** *and took possession of all their irrigated lands and burned the cities of S¹bl and the cities of Hrm and the cities of **Fnnn** and killed three thousand (3,000) of them and killed their kings and took prisoner five thousand (5,000) of them and seized fifteen thousand (15,000) of their livestock and imposed upon them a tribute for al-mqh and Sabaʾ. With a vengeance he avenged the free men of Sabaʾ and Ḍhr, who were under the protection of Krbʾl,*

This confirms what we suggested earlier about the Jewish priests from relatively later epochs (600 – 500 BC) having attributed the victories of Karb- Īl Watr to the Children of Israel. In other words, it is very likely that they "borrowed" the exploits of the emerging Sabaic state, and rewrote them as religious chronicles pertaining to the Israelite monarchs. Consequently, the historic figure of Karb-Īl became the basis for the legendary King David (Dhū-Wadd).

To deepen the reader's understanding of the phenomenon of borrowing historical figures and remolding them into religious icons (or retelling their story through a religious lens), we can draw an analogy from the Mongol military campaign in Iraq, which occurred over a millennium ago. At the time, the Pope's messages to churches throughout Europe comprised a call for his subjects to pray for King David, who had come to conquer Baghdad. The so-called "David" of the Vatican's correspondences was none other than Genghis Khan himself. The Catholic priesthood in Rome simply envisioned him in the image of the ancient Israelite king.

Photo 12: Inscription "RES 3945"
(Source: Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions)

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* Note the *-n* suffix in the name.

3 – And they departed from Phunun, and encamped in **Abuth** (Numbers 33:43).

The convoy left Funūnah, in the Maqāṭirah district of Laḥij, and proceeded towards the nearby directorate of al-Qubayṭah, where the Israelites rested in a mountainous area called *Abut*. We can find this place today, by its very name, in the isolation of al-Qubayṭah, and specifically the village of Nakhīlah, where lies the locality of Abut al-Dhirā‘[86]. From an etymological perspective, the origin of the Arabic terms *Qibṭ – Qibṭi* (English: Copt – Coptic) appears to be related to al-Qubayṭah which, as we will demonstrate in a future volume of this book (***Imagined Israel – Volume III: The Geography of the Gospels***), was the true and historical setting of the story of Yashū‘ (Jesus Christ).

4 – And they departed from Abuth and encamped in **‘Ayy ‘Abarim,** at the border of **Muab** (Numbers 33:44).

Thus, the convoy departed from the directorate of al-Maqāṭirah and journeyed into al-Qubayṭah, where the pilgrims made a stop at Abut, before proceeding to ‘Ayy and ‘Abarim, in the highlands of Muab. The first site, ‘Ayy, is situated in the Laḥij governorate, where it can be identified today as the locality of al-‘Awīn, within the isolation of al-Yūsifīn[87]. As for ‘Abarim, it is none other than the village of ‘Abr al-Jarībah, which lies in the isolation of ‘Uzlat Karsh, within the very same directorate[88].

It is pertinent to note that the Arabic equivalent to the ancient Yemeni (Hebrew) term *kabul* (גבול) is *qābil,* which can mean either "that which faces the traveler" (as he / she hikes across the highlands), or "the frontier, or border of a place". Thus, the Bible describes ‘Ayy (‘Awīn) as being directly opposite to (or facing) Muab. The latter coincides with the locality of al-Muāb, situated in the isolation of al-Ashāhibah, now part of the directorate of al-Maqāṭirah[89]. We can therefore surmise that what the Old Testament refers to as "The Moabites", or "People of Moab" (as the name is represented in the English translations), were actually the inhabitants of these fringe regions of ancient Laḥij, in Yemen.

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86) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=52286
87) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=52413
88) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=28743
89) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=53241

5 – And they departed from 'Ayy 'Abarim, and encamped in **Dibun Gad** (Numbers 33:45).

As we explained in previous publications, the name *Jad – Gad* refers to the South Arabian tribe of Khūlān, historically known as *Khūlān Jad* by Arab chroniclers. In the Musnad inscriptions discovered in Yemen, the name *Khwln* always occurs before and in conjunction with *Gddn*[*]. As for the Hebrew name *Dibn* (דיבן), its Arabic equivalent would be *Dhībān,* and we can indeed find it in several places throughout Yemen. For example: the locality of Dhībān situated in the isolation of al-Athāwir (in the Ta'iz governorate)[90], the village of Bayt Dhībān, in the governorate of Ḥajjah[91], and the village of Ahl Bani Dhībān, within the Yāfi' district[**], in the governorate of Laḥij[92].

6 – And they departed from Dibun Gad, and encamped in **'Almun Dablathim** (Numbers 33:46).

The pilgrims would have moved from the Mawāṣit directorate of Ta'iz, where they rested in the mountain location of 'Almūn, before making their way to the Maqbanah directorate, the site of Dablatim. The first location is none other than 'Uzlat al-U'lūm[93], whereas the second can be identified today as the locality of al-Dabīlah, in the isolation of al-Qaḥīfah, which lies in the same directorate[94]. The Biblical site of Dablatim also features as *Bayt Dabltn* in an ancient South Arabian inscription mistakenly labeled "The Mesha Stele", which was stolen from Yemen by an archeologist and reburied in Jordan.

7 – And they departed from 'Almon Dablathim, and encamped in the mountains of **'Abrim**, before **Nabu** (Numbers 33:47).

Regarding the Biblical site of Nabu, we have evidence from another passage which clearly describes it as being a peak within the 'Abarim mountain range:

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90) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=83024
91) See: Arabic Wikipedia (بيت ذيبان (حجّة
92) See: Arabic Wikipedia (أهل بني ذيبان (يافع
93) See: Arabic Wikipedia (عزلة الأعلوم (تعز
94) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=74958

* See, for example, inscriptions "Ja 601" and "Robin Umm Layla – 1", both of which can be found in the **Digital Archive of South Arabian inscriptions**.

** This is the same Biblical *Yphy'* (יפיע), which features as *Japhia* in the English texts.

And Yhwh spoke to Moses that same day, saying: "Go up into this mountain of ʿAbarim, to Mount Nabu in the land of Moab opposite Yericho; there you may see the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel for their heritage" (Deuteronomy 32: 48, 49).

Tracing the footsteps of the pilgrims from Miqbanah towards the directorate of al-Mawāṣit, we pass through the ʿAbarim Mountains, and eventually come upon the peak of Nabu (נבו). The latter is situated in the expansive directorate of al-Shamāyatayn, within the isolation of al-ʿAzāʿiz, specifically the village of Ḥajfāt, which has preserved the name as *al-Nabū*[95], until today. As for ʿAbarim, it coincides with the village of al-Miʿbār, in the same directorate, in the neighboring isolation of Bani Shaybah[96].

8 – And they departed from the mountains of ʿAbarim, encamped in the lowlands of Moab, by **ha-Yardin** at Yericho. And they encamped by ha-Yardin, from Beth **ha-Yashmuth** unto **Abel Shaṭṭim**, in the wilderness of Moab (Numbers 33: 48, 49).

And so the Israelites reached one of the most sacred places, namely *h-Yshmt* (הישמת), or what is today called *al-Shamāyatayn*, before roaming the border region between Taʿiz and Laḥij, and finally stopping at Abel. To this day, we can find the latter site in the same geographical space: directorate of al-Qubayṭah, ʿUzlat al-Yūsifīn, village of al-Ḥarīshah, locality of al-Ibl[97]. In the same directorate, we can also find the nearby locality of al-Shaṭṭ (Hebrew: *Shaṭṭim*), which belongs to the village of al-Makhāyirah[98].

At the end of this travelogue, we can see that the scribes recorded extensively the names of the places visited by the ritual procession, in the highlands and valleys of Yemen, whereby they summarized the culmination of the journey in one sentence: *"They reached ha-Yardin"*. This is the sacred vale which, for ages untold, has occupied the thoughts, beliefs and deepest perceptions of all the followers of Yemen's ancient religions. It is the site wherein flows the holy waters which the Mandaeans had venerated, and would later be venerated in Mosaic Monotheism, Judaism, and Christianity. This valley extends from Bayt-Yashmut (the directorate of al-Shamāyatayn, in Taʿiz), all the way to the highlands of the Dhamār governorate.

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95) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=81010
96) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=38816
97) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=52332
98) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=52127

Geographically, al-Shamāyatayn is one of Yemen's largest directorates. Located south of the city of Taʿiz proper, it once encompassed the capital of a province that was known in ancient times as *al-Maʿāfir*, a name which became defunct after the modern administrative division of Yemen. Scattered throughout its valleys and highlands are some of the most important archeological sites in the country, among them Sharjab, Dhabḥān, al-Ḥaḍramah, and Adīm. The name *Maʿāfir* (Hebrew: *Awphr*) appeared for the first time in the shape of *M'frn,* in the Sabaic inscriptions dating back to the 7th Century BC (around the same period during which most of the early scriptures of the Torah were recorded). Its name appears in the Ḥimyaritic texts as well, even as late as the 3rd Century AD.

The borders of the historic Maʿāfir district extended to four provinces: Ibb, Taʿiz, Laḥij, and al-Ḍāliʿ. The directorates that were once part of its territory are: Khadīr, al-Ṣalū, Ḥayfān, Sāmiʿ, al-Mawāṣit, al-Misrākh, and al-Shamāyatayn. The region was inhabited by many well-known clans, among the most prominent of which were al-Maʿāfirah (branches of the Tamīm and Midhḥaj tribes). In previous publications, we provided extensive data on the Yardin Valley[*], and demonstrated that it is none other than Wādi Mawr, the giant gorge that cuts through the land of Yemen, dividing it into east and west.

This astonishingly accurate list of sites in which the scribes of the Torah recorded the second series of excursions undertaken by the Israelites, after Aaron's death, cannot be reconciled with the geography of ancient Egypt, nor with that of Palestine. Moreover, the numerous excavations undertaken in the Sinai Peninsula over eight decades have failed to provide any evidence, however marginal, of the wandering of Israelite clans through its territory.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Biblical passages describing what became known as "The Exodus" is their establishment of a religious time span for the event which, at first glance, seems impossible to imagine. This span is, in reality, a purely religious construct – an absolute interval of time in which distances are rendered immeasurable, and the possibility of believing its implications becomes a matter of faith rather than verifiable fact.

To illustrate, let us quote the following example from Deuteronomy:

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[*] See our book ***The Fall of Jericho and the Myth of Crossing the River Jordan,*** translated from Arabic by Bassam Abu Ghazalah – published in 2016.

And the days in which we journeyed from **Qadash Barn'**, until we came upon the brook **Zard**, were **thirty and eight years**; until all the generation of the men of war were consumed from the midst of the camp, as Yhwh had sworn unto them (Deuteronomy 2:14).

By virtue of this narrative style, the distance becomes an absolute concept that is quite simply implausible. How can such a time span be spent on a trek between two places separated by no more than a hundred kilometers? The only feasible explanation is that the text is describing a mass journey, undertaken on an annual basis, in the manner of a strict, religious tradition; a tradition that was observed during Moses' era, for a period of thirty-eight years. This clearly indicates that the trips between Qadas and Zard constituted a pilgrimage.

On the contrary, it is possible to envision the journey in real-time, when we read that the distance between Mount Ḥarib and Qadas requires only eleven days of travel, as is stated in the following passage:

It is eleven days' journey from **Ḥarib** by the way of Mount **Sa'ir** to Qadash Barn' (Deuteronomy 1:2).

This is quite a reasonable distance, as it does actually take anywhere between ten days and two weeks (depending on encumbrance and weather conditions) to travel on foot from Ḥarīb (in Laḥij)[*] to Qadas (in Taʿiz). What is equally surprising is that Zard (זרד) is indeed situated within the same geographical space as the adjacent sites of Qadas and Burʿ (Qadash Barnʿ). We can find it today in the directorate of al-Mawāsiṭ, ʿUzlat Qadas, village of Bani Manṣūr, where it coincides with the locality of Zarīd[99].

The Children of Israel frequented these sites on an annual basis, for nearly forty years, during specific months. They would traverse Zarīd and hike across the highlands to Qadas and Burʿ, before returning to al-Ṣanah, and so forth[**]. It was quite simply a religious rite, somewhat similar to the ritual called *al-Saʿī,* which the Muslims observe every year during the pilgrimage season, as they trek back and forth between the two landmarks al-Ṣafa and al-Marwa, in Makkah.

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99) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=85407

* See footnote #23, in Chapter 3 this book.

** Note how Zarīd lies in the vicinity of Qadas, in Yemen, exactly as described in the Old Testament.

At the end of this chapter, it is imperative that we raise the issue of Qadas and Burʿ once again, to reaffirm the conclusion we drew in our previously published books. The *-n* suffix often employed in old Yemeni dialects, in both nouns and verbs, is thought to be an extinct pronoun article. Linguists refer to it as *al-Nūn al-Kilāʿiyyah*, relative to a particular region called *Mikhlāf al-Kilāʿ,* whose inhabitants were known to employ it in their speech. The letter very often found it way into written documents, as is evident in the hundreds of Musnad inscriptions unearthed throughout the country. To give a few examples of this phenomenon, the names *Ṣanʿāʾ*, *ʿAdn*, and *Miṣr* feature as *Ṣnʿn*, *ʿAdnn* and *Mṣrn,* in these ancient texts. The letter occasionally appears in the middle of words, as in *Burʿ – Burnʿ*. As such, the Biblical name *Qdsh Brnʿ* can be represented as *Qadas al-Burʿ* in Arabic, by dropping the superfluous character.

Qadas is known for the natural reserve that surrounds it, called *al-Burʿ*, as well as the village of Dhul-Burʿ, which lies at the foot of the mountain. These two adjacent sites are situated in the district of al-Mawāsiṭ, in Taʿiz[100]. What the passage in the Torah is essentially telling us is that the pilgrims took the path via Mount Saʿīr, and from there made their way to Qadas, completing the journey within the specified time frame. This same road is still open today; moreover, the village of Saʿīr (שעיר) itself can indeed be found in the same directorate of Taʿiz, within the isolation of Bani Ḥammād[101].

On this occasion, we would remind our readers that archeologists specializing in the Bronze Age excavated the site of Umm al-Rashrāsh in Palestine, with the pre-conception of it being the very site of Qadash Barnʿ. However, they were soon disappointed because what they uncovered in the outskirts of that town did not match the Biblical narrative, by any stretch of the imagination. In other words, Umm al-Rashrāsh cannot be Qadash. The simplest explanation is that they were digging in the wrong country to begin with, and were completely unaware of Mount Qadas in Yemen, and of the natural reserve of al-Burʿ, which surrounds it. To this day, the villagers and pastoralists residing on the slopes of this towering mountain are famous for a folk dance which they have inherited for many generations, and which they call *Raqsat al-Burʿ.* There lies the *Qadash* of the Torah, and there lies Burʿ- Burnʿ.

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100) https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qadas_(Taiz)
101) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=85868

Photo 13: Yemeni tribesmen brandishing their daggers as they perform the traditional Dance of al-Burʻ
(Source: http://yemen-now.com/news1376844.html - article published on 2/12/2016)

Photo 14: The village of al-Burʻ, at the foot of Mount Qadas
(Source: public domain – photo posted in May, 2016)

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE UNATTAINABLE DREAM

The religious journey undertaken by the closely-knit community aspiring to meet with its god in the wilderness revolves around two central axes:

First: The sanctification of certain places and landmarks for the purpose of conducting continuous ceremonies and rituals in honor of the deity.

Second: The community's search for a land of stable residency, which will enable them to permanently transition from a nomadic existence on the fringes to a sedentary lifestyle. This is the essence of the divine assurance given to the Israelites regarding their "Promised Land". It is the consummation of their age-old dream of leaving their previous pastoral life of goat and cattle herding, which defined their existence in Miṣrim.

Within the context of this correlation between the pilgrimage on the one hand and their search for the Promised Land on the other, we can understand the Exodus as being a religious ritual, rather than an actual, historical event. This is confirmed by the passages of the scripture we analyzed in the previous chapter, which speak of forty years spent by the Israelites on the road to Mount Qadas.

At the end of this long pilgrimage, and after all the hardships and trials endured in the wilderness, Moses reassured his followers that their Lord had shown him the Promised Land and defined its frontiers, yet at the same time barred them from entering it. What does this mean? What could be the rationale behind this prohibition? If we place the Exodus within its proper framework in the history of Yemen, we will find that at the time the mass migration from Miṣrim is estimated to have occurred (1300 – 1200 BC), the Minaeans had firm control over vast stretches of the country, their influence extending from the Jawf region to Najrān in the north, and the Red Sea coast of Ḥajjah and al-Ḥudaydah to the west.

The Minaeans of Miṣrn (Miṣrim) had subjugated other powerful Yemeni tribes, foremost among which were Saba' in the north, and Ḥimyar in the south. These two groups presented the most dangerous rival forces to the Minanean kings of the Far'ah dynasty, who felt threatened by the rise of a new religious doctrine that could, in time, replace their national deity Wadd with the wrathful, volcanic god Jehovah. Indeed, one of the most important aspects of the Israelite

pilgrimage is that it lent real momentum to the conflict between the followers of those two religions.

Thus, the dream of the "Promised Land" represented the deeply engrained aspiration of the Sabaic and Ḥimyaritic tribes to reclaim their fertile territories which the kings of Maʿīn had plundered. This tribal conflict also had symbolic, political and spiritual dimensions, being that the Minaeans – who were pagans, and who recorded their religious texts in a dialectic known as *Canaanite* – were descendants of the ancient tribe of Thamūd, whose origins can be traced to Ḥaḍramawt. In this sense, the conflict between Maʿīn Miṣrn on one hand and Saba' and Ḥimyar on the other could be thought of as a struggle between the North and Ḥaḍramawt*. In this historical milieu, the Exodus can be viewed as a symbolic expression of the first rebellion led by the subjugated northern tribes against the authority of the Minaeans.

The priests and scribes of later eras gave a new dimension to this conflict, whereby it became an entirely religious one, and told the story from the point of view of the nomadic Israelites and their struggle against the sedentary Canaanites. Consequently, the true history of the conflict faded within the Biblical texts, whereby the Sabaic and Minaean heroes who wrote it were re-imagined as the "Children of Israel" and their mighty, tyrannical opponents.

Within the framework of this fabrication, the successive fall of the Minaean townships and the collapse of their forces at the hands of the Makribs of Saba', was portrayed as a march of the Israelites against their Canaanite enemies. In other words, the Sabaic tribes' dream of recovering their lands from the clutches of Maʿīn (the kings of the Jawf region of Yemen) became an Israelite aspiration, to which the Jewish priests of later eras added a religious tone. On a particular level, it can be said that the legendary figure of King David, and his conquest of the Canaanite cities, was a romanticized reproduction of the exploits of Karb-Īl Watr. The famous Victory Stele unearthed at Ṣirwāḥ is a testimony to this.

The approach that many tribes throughout the world have taken towards historic events is always the same. There is not a single tribe or nation that has not, at one point in its history, attributed the deeds, exploits or victories of another tribe

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* This political schism brings to mind the division of Yemen into two states, the Northern (Arab Republic) and Southern (Peoples' Democratic Republic), in the 1960's.

to itself, or re-imagined the heroes of the other as being its own champions. The Children of Israel, who were no exception to this trend, had to wait nearly seven hundred years from the time of their initial departure from Miṣrim for the Makribs to arrive on the scene and overthrow the rule of the Minaeans. This event paved the way for the establishment of their small, religious fiefdom, which existed and flourished, for a time, within the fold of the greater, federal kingdom of Saba'.

In this chapter, we will present all the necessary evidence for this theory, through our review and analysis of the pertinent Biblical texts which determine the borders of the Promised Land.

Let us begin with the following passage from the scripture:

And Yhwh spoke unto Moses, saying: "Enjoin the children of Israel, and say to them: when you come into the land of Canaan, it shall be your heritage; even the land of Canaan shall be bounded by these borders: your south side shall be from the wilderness of **Ṣan** alongside of **Adum**, and your southern border shall be from the end of **Yam Milḥ**, eastward" (Numbers 34: 1 – 3).

As stipulated in the above text, these are the general borders of the land of Canaan; the land that was part of the territories of the Minaean tribes, whose chiefs had established the kingdom of Miṣrn (Miṣrim), in the Jawf region of Yemen, and whose influence eventually spread to the Red Sea coast of Ḥajjah and al-Ḥudaydah, enabling them to lead the trade of the ancient world. Thus, Jehovah enjoined Moses to address the Children of Israel regarding his promise that this land would, in time, be theirs.

Based on the facts we can confirm from the history of Yemen, there was no force capable of withstanding the might of the Kingdom of Miṣrn during that era (around 1300 BC). It was not until 850 BC that the Sabaic tribes in the northern parts of the country were gradually able to wrestle their fertile territories from the grip of the Minaeans. In our view, this explains why Moses told his people that Jehovah had shown him the Promised Land, but that they were barred from entering it at the time.

With the advent of the unified state of Saba', the tradition of the "King-Priest" – i.e. the *Makrib* (plural form in Hebrew: *karubim*) emerged. This was most

probably the real age of the emergence of the kingdom of Israel. Like all tribes, the Israelites were granted the right to establish their own small, hereditary religious fiefdom (*mikhlāf*), within the fold of the federal state of Saba'. Just as the Children of Israel had conceived the character of Moses as the central figure of a religious story of the "Savior" who would lead them out of Miṣrim, they also invented legendary kings and attributed to them the establishment of a unified, homogenous kingdom, with the aim of ascribing specific holiness to their successors. Thus, many Israelite monarchs appeared in the Torah whose names do not feature in any other written record[*].

To imagine the entire land of Canaan – the land of the Minaean kingdom extending from the Jawf region as far as the coast of al-Ḥudaydah – as the country that Jehovah promised to the Israelites simply has no basis in history. There is no verifiable inscription or written record of any kind (outside the Torah) to support this allegation.

While archeological relics unearthed in Yemen do in fact confirm the successive Sabaic victories against Maʿīn Miṣrn, and the fall of the latter's townships, it can be inferred that the Israelite scribes attributed these events to the history of their own tribes. Notwithstanding this, we will reaffirm that the Israelites did indeed establish a small, religious kingdom – along with other similar states founded by the various tribes that were allied with Saba' – within the federal parent domain founded by the Makribs. We have, in the Book of Numbers, a very accurate list of specific places and landmarks, accompanied by a description of the relative locations of these sites with respect to each other. The so-called "Land of Canaan" in the Bible consists exclusively of the territories controlled by the tribes of Maʿīn.

In a parallel vein, the designation of Palestinians as "Canaanites" in the prevailing literature is a blatant fabrication on the part of Bible scholars, which has led to the creation of a mass delusion having no basis whatsoever. Sadly, there is not a Palestinian alive today who does not proudly reiterate the slogan "I am a Canaanite", without being aware of the deception. We would therefore call for the removal of this erroneous term from the educational curriculums.

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[*] A number of these kings, like Ḥazqiah, Aḥaz, and Manasseh (to name a few) have been confirmed as actual, historical figures, since they are mentioned in Assyrian and Babylonian artifacts. The earlier heroic figures of Saul (*Shaul*), David (*Dwd*), Solomon (*Shlmh*) and Jonathan (*Yunthn*), are most likely legendary personages modelled after tribal Sabaic war chiefs.

The Sacred Pilgrimage Road from Ṣanah to Qadas

In the Maʿāfir district of Taʿiz, we can find the well-trodden road linking Mount Ṣanah to Qadas. The highland route leads to the directorate of al-Shamāyatayn (Yashmuth), where the isolation of Adīm is situated. This means that the border of the land of Canaan extended from the Jawf region to the northernmost reaches of Lahij, passing through the directorate of al-Mawāsiṭ, particularly the town of al-Sawāʾ (the Biblical *So – Sua*), site of the famous fortress of al-Qadm[102].

The fortress of al-Qadm is considered to be one of the most prominent features of al-Sawāʾ. It is very highly likely that the Old Testament account of the Assyrian conflict with Miṣrim refers to the Mesopotamian monarch's struggle against the tribal alliance of Maʿīn for control of the international trade routes, as we demonstrated in previous publications. This is confirmed by the fact that the Assyrians captured a Minaean war general or chief named *Sawāʾ* (סוא), whereas there is not, in the entire history of Egypt, any record of an event involving the apprehension of one of its kings at the hands of an invading force.

The fortress is surmounted by the vestiges of a large town, which surround it from the north and the south, and which can still be seen today. Recently, during random excavations at the site, a group of curious ramblers uncovered some very important artifacts related to that specific era, which have unfortunately disappeared. Certain features of the stronghold, such as the remains of its outhouse and of two ancient temples – one at its apex and another at its foot, on the southern side – are still intact. Within this same geographical space, we can find the river valley of Milḥ (or Waters of Milḥ), in the directorate of Miqbanah, specifically the isolation of Bani Ṣalāḥ. It is known today as *Wādi al-Milḥ*, a locality situated in the village of al-Salīf[103].

It can therefore be inferred from the Biblical text that the borders of the Promised Land encompassed a substantial part of the territory that was under the control of Maʿīn, extending over an area which today covers the most prominent directorates of Taʿiz, namely: al-Shamāyatayn, al-Mawāsiṭ, Jabal Ḥabshi, Sharʿab al-Salām, and al-Maʿāfir.

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102) See: Arabic Wikipedia (حصن القدم)

103) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=74714

Let us now examine further passages in the scripture, which detail a series of other locations that are equally crucial to pinpointing the boundaries of the Promised Land.

And your border shall turn about southward of the ascent of **'Aqrabim**, and pass along to **Ṣan**; and the goings out thereof shall be southward of **Qadash-Barn'**; and it shall go forth to **Ḥaṣar-Addar**, and pass along to **'Aṣmunah** (Numbers 34:4).

According to this description, the boundary extended from the Jabal Ḥabshi district of Taʿiz, through the ascent of ʿAqrabbim, which today coincides with a village called Ḥabīl al-ʿAqārib, situated in the isolation of Karsh, in the al-Qubayṭah directorate of Laḥij[104]. From there, the border passed through Jabal al-Ṣanah, in the Maʿāfir region, and onwards to Qadas al-Burʿ (Qadash Barnʿ), in the directorate of al-Mawāsiṭ.

The Biblical site of Ḥaṣar is located in the Ibb governorate (directorate of Ḥabīsh), where it can be identified today as the locality of Ḥaḍār – Ḥaḍārah, which belongs to the village of al-Athlah[105]. The Ḥabīsh district is adjacent to the directorate of al-ʿUdayn, wherein lies ancient Jerusalem, and where we can also find Addar, which is none other than al-Dūr[106], one of the most famous valleys of the region. Al-Dūr, which is mentioned in several historical sources, lies just south of the town of ʿUdayn proper, and is considered to be one of the most scenic valleys of the directorate. Within this same domain we can also find ʿAṣmunah (rendered as *Azmon* in the English translations), which coincides with the village of ʿAṣīmah, in the Baʿdān directorate of Ibb[107]. As such, the borders of the Promised Land extended from Jabal Ḥabshi in Taʿiz, towards the frontier of Laḥij in the south, and back to Ṣanah, before ascending towards the ʿUdayn district of Ibb, the site of Wādi al-Dūr (Addar).

And the border shall turn about from ʿAṣmonah unto the brook of Miṣrim, and the goings out thereof shall end at the sea. And as for the western border, you shall even have the great sea for a border. This shall be your west border. And this shall be your north border: from the great sea you shall mark out for you **Mount Har**. And from Mount Har you shall mark out unto the entrance of **Ḥamath**; and the goings out of the border shall be at **Ṣadadah** (Numbers 34: 5 – 8).

104) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=28662
105) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=40005
106) http://ye.geoview.info/wadi_ad_dur,75911
107) See: Arabic Wikipedia (عصيمة (بعدان

The Hebrew term *Nḥlh Miṣrim* (נחלֹה מצרים), falsely translated as "torrent / brook / stream / or river of Egypt", actually refers to Mikhlāf al-Suḥūl, by far the most fertile and renowned valley in Ibb. The basin joins a series of permanent waterways which flow from the north of the city of Ibb, as well as the river valleys of northwestern Ḥabīsh and Baʿdān, the streams coursing down from Mount al-Manār, al-Makhādir, the western reaches of the Yarīm Country, Shayʿān, Riḥāb, in addition to those flowing from Sumārah, southern ʿUtmah, and the eastern parts of the Wuṣāb al-ʿĀli ranges. The Suḥūl basin waters the territories of Zabīd, before emptying in the Red Sea, exactly as the Biblical text describes, when it states: *"…you shall even have the great sea for a border".* As for the site of Har ha-Har (הר ההר) – or Mount Har – it coincides today with the locality of al-Jabal, which we identified earlier.

Based on the definition given above, we can draw a comprehensive picture of Biblical Israel as a territory extending from the directorate of Jabal Ḥabshi in Taʿiz, northwards to the outskirts of the city of Ibb, and westwards to the Red Sea coast (the "Great Sea" mentioned in the text).

It should be noted at this point that there is a huge difference between what was conceived in the Israelite dream and the reality achieved on the ground. A deeper understanding of this idea can help us make the distinction between what the priests and scribes envisioned as the "Promised Land" and their actual establishment of a small fiefdom, having an area of no more than a few square kilometers. To rephrase what we are saying within the framework of the history of Yemen: the vision of the Promised Land was originally a dream of the Sabaic and Ḥimyaritic tribes (i.e. the alliance of the tribes of the North and the South); whereas the actual founding of a particular religious domain, wherein Jehovah could be venerated without any persecution, was the dream of the Children of Israel, who were but a part of that tribal conglomeration.

According to the passage in Numbers, the boundary passed through the outskirts of Ḥamath, and from there unto Ṣadadah (or *Zedadah,* as it appears in the English translations). Ḥamath can be found today within the directorate of al-Misrākh, in Taʿiz, specifically the isolation of al-Uqrūd, where the name designates two sites: Ḥamah al-ʿUlya (Upper Ḥamah) and Ḥamah al-Sufla (Lower Ḥamah)[108]. As for the site of Ṣadadah, it is identifiable as the locality of

108) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=38411

Sadād, which belongs to the village of al-Kafīf, situated in the directorate of al-Shamāyatayn[109]. It would also appear that the original version of the name – vocalized with the *Ṣad* letter rather than the *Sin* – remained in use since Biblical times, as it can be found in the governorate of Raymah, to the north, where it designates the locality of Ṣadad, within the isolation of Bani al-Ḍabībi[110]. This confirms, once again, that the scribes of the original texts recorded the place names as they vocalized them, occasionally replacing the *Ṣad* letter with a *Sin*.

And the border shall go forth to **Zaphrunah**, and shall end at Ḥaṣar-ʿYnan: this shall be your north border. And you shall mark out your east border from Ḥaṣar-ʿYnan to **Shaphmah**. And the border shall go down from Shaphm to Rablah, on the east side of **ʿAin**; and the border shall go down, and reach to the side of Yam-Chinnereth eastward. And the border shall go down to ha-Yarden, and the goings out thereof shall be at Yam-Milḥ. This shall be your land with its limits on all sides (Numbers 34: 9 – 12).

Once again, we can trace the mountainous frontier from the directorate of Jabal Ḥabshi, in the province of Taʿiz, where lies ʿUzlat Bilād al-Wāfi. Within that isolation, we can find the locality of Zafār, which belongs to the village of Ḥajramīn[111]. The name of this locality features in the feminine form *Zphrnh* (זפרנה), in the original scripture*. From there, the border extends to a site called ʿAyn (עין), which today coincides with ʿAyn Sabāʾ, a locality within the isolation of al-Ḥaql, in the directorate of Jabal Ḥabshi[112].

The northernmost reaches of the Promised Land are defined by Ḥaṣar-ʿYnan and Shāfah (Hebrew: *Shphmh*), both of which lie in the Ibb province. The first coincides today with Bayt ʿAnān, in the directorate of al-Makhādir[113]. The second can be found in the neighboring directorate of Dhil-Safāl[114]. The boundary passes parallel to the Yardin (the great river basin of Yemen known to geographers as *Wādi Mawr*), and from there unto Wādi al-Milḥ, a name which when translated to English, literally means: "Valley of Salt".

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109) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=80708
110) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=60908
111) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=77291
112) http://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=76600
113) See: Arabic Wikipedia (المخادر) بيت عنان
114) See: Arabic Wikipedia (ذي السفال) شافة

* Note the addition of the Ḥimyaritic –*n* suffix to the name (Zafr – Zafrn – Zafrnh). This is comparable to Qadash Brnʿ – Qadas Burʿ.

Photo 15: A scene from Wādi Mawr, in Yemen
(Source: al-Alamtv News website – photo posted in December, 2016)

Photo 16: A scene from Wādi Mawr, in Yemen
(Source: al-Alamtv News website – photo posted in December, 2016)

This has been our concise, intensive, and honest review of the Hebrew scripture, with regards to the geography of what is known as the "Promised Land", whose borders Moses stood upon. However, the Israelite patriarch was not able to realize the prophecy soon after the Exodus from Miṣrim, but instead had to make do with an assurance to his people that they would, one day, inherit it.

The Children of Israel had to wait a considerable period before the Makribs (King-Priests) could expel the Minaeans from their territories and eventually fulfil Jehovah's promise. In time, they would establish a small, religious fiefdom that would live on happily in their imagination as a great kingdom of

vast geographical scope. Yet this imagination cannot but be said to have stemmed from an actual reality, as the Makribs succeeded in wresting their lands in the north from the grasp of the Minaeans of the Jawf region, and allowed their tribal allies to establish autonomous domains (*mikhlāfs*) within a parent entity which history would come to know as the Kingdom of Saba'. This alone explains the struggles that were later waged by the Israelites against dozens of neighboring states, as narrated in the Old Testament.

There was never in ancient Palestine, which was no more than a small sector of the Greater Syrian Empire (what is inaccurately called the "Assyrian Empire"), such a number of tribal domains. On the other hand, we can certainly find such "mini kingdoms" reflected in the *mikhlāfs* of Yemen, which numbered over eighty. And because the king-priests of Saba', who succeeded in harboring and controlling these domains – for a time – defeated the Minaeans (Canaanites), the Israelite scribes envisioned every Sabaic victory as the exploit of their own people, and reimagined the Makribs as being the legendary, early kings of Israel.

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THE LOST SEPULCHER

An Enigma

Among the most puzzling mysteries in the Torah is the issue of Moses' burial. This is despite the fact that the text in Deuteronomy gives us the precise coordinates of the place where he died, and mentions several sites which both confirm the existence of the tomb, and aid in pinpointing its location. This issue has long been overlooked by scholars, due in large part to their ignorance of the religious and cultural milieu that produced the Old Testament. We would reiterate on this occasion that Moses was not a historical figure. The anecdote of his death must be understood as a symbolic account of the passing of the Savior, which in many ways is similar to the Egyptian tale of Osiris, and the Mesopotamian legend of the goddess Tammuz. The geography of the story, however, is quite real and, as such, there is nothing wrong with conducting an analysis of the coordinates, for the purpose of scientific research.

And Yhwh spoke to Moses that same day, saying: "Go up to this mountain 'Abarim, unto mount Nabu, which is in the land of Moab, which is opposite Yericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for possession. And let death come to you on the mountain where you are going, and be put to rest with your people; as death came to Aaron, your brother, on Mount Har, where he was put to rest with his people. Because of your sin against Me before the children of Israel at the waters of **Maribath** Qadesh, in the waste land of Ṣan; because you did not consecrate My name among the children of Israel. So you will see the land before you, but you will not go into the land which I am giving to the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 32: 48 – 52).

What the above passage clearly states is that the Lord punished Moses by depriving him access to the Promised Land, and decreed to him that he would die up on Mount 'Abarim. It also features an allusion to an important site which lies on the ancient pilgrimage route, namely Marib – Maribah, in which Moses perpetrated the sin of not sanctifying Jehovah's name. This site is described in the text as being a "water" (i.e. river valley or basin), on the road from Mount Qadash (קדש) to the wilderness of Ṣan – Ṣin (צן). It is certain that no such place exists in the so-called "Sinai Peninsula" of Egypt. On the contrary, we can find it in the governorate of Ta'iz, in Yemen, and specifically within the directorate of Miqbanah, under the name of 'Uzlat Mīrāb, which does indeed lie between the sites of Qadas and al-Ṣanah.

The isolation of Mīrāb[115] is known for the many villages doting its slopes and peaks, the highest of which is the summit of Jabal al-Sheikh[*], at an altitude of 1,600 meters above sea level. The seclusion is considered a volcanic area, characterized by what geologists call "base rocks" (sedimentary rocks intermixed with an igneous layer)[**].

There lies the actual theater of the story. Of course, any onlooker who gazes from the 'Abarim Mountains will see the land of the Minaeans (Canaanites) stretching out over vast regions of Yemen, as far as the eye can see. The peak of 'Abarim is situated in Ta'iz, within the directorate of al-Shamāyatayn, where it lent its name to 'Uzlat Mi'bar[116], in the Māwiyah district. In that same directorate, we can also find the site of al-Nabū, which we identified previously.

In an earlier chapter, we showed that the district of al-Shamāyatayn (Yashmuth) is considered one of the most sacred places according to the Bible, as it leads directly to Qadas. It is for this reason that the scribes and priests portrayed the story of Moses' legendary passing as though it had been ordained by the Lord; whereby Jehovah himself entrusted him to ascend to the top of the mountain and die there, as Aaron had died before him on the summit of Mount Har – Hor.

And Moses went up from the plains of Muab unto mount Nabu, to the top of Phisgah, that is opposite **Yariḥu**. And Yhwh showed him all the land of Gil'ad, unto **Dan.** And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Yehudah, unto the utmost sea. And the south, and the plain of the valley of Yericho, the city of palm trees, unto **Ṣu'r.** And Yhwh said to him: "This is the land about which I made an oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, I will give it to your seed: now I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not go in there". So death came to Moses, the servant of Yhwh, there in the land of Moab, as Yhwh had said. And the Lord put him to rest in the valley in the land of Muab, opposite **Beth-Pha'ur**: but no man has knowledge of his resting-place to this day (Deuteronomy 34: 1 – 6).

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115) See: Arabic Wikipedia (تعز) عزلة ميراب and https://www.mindat.org/feature-72639.html

116) See: Arabic Wikipedia (تعز) عزلة معبر and https://www.geonames.org/12099213/al-mi-bar.html

* The same name designates a mountain that lies along the Lebanese – Syrian border; no doubt a relic of the tribes that migrated from the Arabian Peninsula to the Levant, in ages long past.

** Once again, this reminds us of the often ignored fact that Jehovah was originally an egocentric and wrathful volcanic god, who manifested in thunder, lightning, earthquakes and burning shrubs. It is enough to study any volcanic map of the Middle-East to realize that such geographic features are common characteristics of the Arabian Peninsula, not of Sinai or Palestine.

Several names are worthy of note in the above passage, especially: Dan (דן), Yariḥo (ירחו), Ṣuʿr (צער), and Beth-Phaʿur (בית פעור).

Dan were a branch of Yāfiʿ that was historically known as *Adhān*. This powerful South Arabian tribe previously resided in the land of Ḥimyar, before migrating to their new home, in the late 2nd Century BC. They are mentioned in the famous Ṣirwāḥ Inscription, a monumental glyph which chronicles the wars waged by the Sabaic king Karb Yabīn[*] against several mikhlāfs in Yemen, among which was the city-state of Dahs (whose name features as *Dahsm*, in the Musnad record). These wars, which took place during 6th Century BC, led to dramatic changes in the country's tribal balance of power. Other inscriptions also refer to the wars fought by the clans of Dhū-Raydān against the Kings of Sabaʾ, which marked the beginning of the Ḥimyaritic era, and eventually resulted in the establishment of the first truly centralized state in Yemen.

In the geographic domain once known as *Mikhlāf al-ʿAwd*, located between the governorates of Ibb and al-Ḍāliʿ, there is a large mountain range, the most prominent peak of which is Mount Dhū-Dān, where an ancient Musnad inscription that was designated by the same name – "Naqsh Dhūdān" – was discovered. These mountains are characterized by the presence of numerous fortresses, among which are al-Riyāshi, Ṣafwān, and Qumrān. The latter marks the site where Biblical archeologists uncovered what they fraudulently called the "Dead Sea Scrolls", and which they subsequently planted in a cave in Jordan, claiming a shepherd had happened upon them there[**].

In his expansive gazetteer on the tribes of Arabia, the great Yemeni geographer and chronicler al-Hamadāni alludes to Adhān's original homeland being on the slopes of a mountain called *al-ʿUrr*, which is part of Sarāt Ḥimyar, in Laḥij. In his footnote comments on al-Hamadāni's book, late Yemeni scholar ʿAli al-Akwaʿ stated that the name of this tribe, which all but vanished from memory, is also spelled *Adān* in other sources[117].

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117) See: *Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab* (English: *Character of the Arabian Peninsula*) – 1st Edition, Irshād Library, Ṣanʿāʾ – 1990 (p. 172, 173).

* This is the same *Yabin Ḥaṣor* (Jabin Hazor) of the Old Testament.

** The Qumrān Fortress in Yemen is known today by the name of *Ḥanūl*. It is located in the directorate of al-Nādirah, in Ibb. For more information on this archeological site, see: Arabic Wikipedia (مديرية النادرة).

Administratively, the name *Dan* has indeed survived in Laḥij, within the directorate of al-Ḥad, where we can still find a village bearing it: Wādi Dān[118]. In these same environs, nestled in the isolation of ʿUzlat Zārah, we can find the village of Qū Yarīḥ (Yariḥu – Jericho). It is situated in the province of Abyan, specifically the directorate of Lawdar, which is directly adjacent to Laḥij[119].

As for Ṣuʿr – which features as *Zoar* in the English translations of the scripture – it is the name of a locality within the directorate of al-Maʿāfir (in Taʿiz), situated in the isolation of al-Sawāʿ[120]. In the adjacent directorate of al-Misrākh, we can find the locality of al-Faghrah[121], which coincides with the Biblical site of Phaʿrh (or Beth-Phaʿur)*. According to Deuteronomy, the latter is the very site where Moses was buried, although his actual tomb was lost to the world. Once again, this confirms our view that the entire account of his death was a religious fable, in which a true geographical theater was linked to a symbolic figure, of whose existence no inscription or physical trace has ever been found.

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118) See: Arabic Wikipedia (وادي دان (الحد

119) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_vill&ide=2834

120) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=84429

121) https://www.yemenna.com/index.php?go=guide&op=show_part&ide=78597

* Note how the name is feminized in Arabic. Also, bear in mind that the Hebrew dialect does not vocalize the Arabic *Ghayn* letter, and substitutes it either with the *ʿAyn* (ע), or *Gimel* (ג).

GLOSSARY OF BIBLICAL SITES

(In the order of their occurrence)

Number	Hebrew Spelling	Original Transliteration	English Interpretation	Corresponding name in Yemen	Arabic Transliteration
1	סיני	Sini	Sinai	سياني	al-Siyāni
2	סין	Sin	Sin	السينه	al-Sīnah
3	צן	Ṣn	Zin	صن / صنه	Ṣan / Ṣanah
4	קדש	Qdsh	Kadesh	قدس	Qadas
5	אילם	Aylm	Elim	الليمة	al-Līmah
6	ים סוף	Ym Suph	Red Sea	السيف	al-Sayf
7	עמרם	ʿAmrm	Amram	عمران	ʿAmrān / ʿImrān
8	פתם	Pthm	Pithom	ثوم	Thūm / Phūm
9	רעמסס	Rʿmss	Ramses	رع / ترعت	Raʿ / Tarʿt
10	גשן	Gshn	Goshen/ Gessen	جشن	Jashan
11	מצרים	Mṣrim	Egypt	معين مصرن	Maʿīn Miṣrn
12	פארן	Pharn	Paran / Pharan	فران	Farān
13	קברות	Qbruth	Kibroth	المقيبرات	al-Muqaybirāt
14	התאוה	Hthawh	Hathawah	أتوه	Atwah
15	חצרות	Ḥṣruth	Hazeroth	حضرات	Ḥaḍrāt
16	חרבה	Ḥrbh	Horeb	حريب	Ḥarīb
17	מדין	Mdyn	Midian	دار المدان	Dār al-Madān
18	יפיע	Yphiʿ	Japhea	يافع	Yāfiʿ
19	סכת	Skth	Succoth	السكوت	al-Sukūt
20	אתם	Athm	Etham	تامة	Tāmah
21	החירת	Hḥyrth	Hahiroth	الحارثية	al-Ḥarthiyah
22	בעל צפון	Bʿl Ṣphun	Baalzephon	صفونة	Ṣafūnah
23	מגדל	Mgdl	Migdol	المجدلة	al-Majdalah
24	שור	Shwr	Shur	مشورة	Mashūrah
25	מרה	Mrh	Marah	المريرة	al-Marīrah
26	דפקה	Dphqh	Dophkah	الضربة	al-Ḍarbah.
27	אלוש	Alwsh	Alush	الوش	al-Wash
28	רפידם	Rphydm	Raphidim	المرفد	al-Marfad
29	רתמה	Rthmh	Rathmah	اللجم / رثم	al-Lajm / Rathm
30	רמן	Rmn	Rimmon-Pharez	الرمانة	al-Rummānah
31	פרץ	Phrṣ		الفريصة	al-Farīṣah
32	לבנה	Lbnh	Libnah	اللبان	al-Labān
33	רסה	Rssh	Rassah	راس النقيل	Rās al-Naqīl
34	קהלתה	Qhlthh	Kehelathah	القلات	al-Qalāt
35	חרדה	Ḥrdh	Haradah	الحريد	al-Ḥarīd
36	מקהלת	Mqhlth	Maqhalath	المقهاية	al-Maqhāyah
37	תחת	Thth	Tahath	الشعبانية السفلى	al-Shaʿbāniyah al-Sufla
38	תרח	Trh	Tarah / Terah	الراحة	al-Rāḥah
39	חשמנה	Ḥshmnh	Hashmonah	حشم / حسام	Ḥashm / Ḥusām
40	מסרות	Masruth	Moseroth	السروت / بني سرت	al-Ṣarūt / Bani Surt
41	בני יעקן	Bani Yʿqn	Benejakaan	عقن	ʿAqan

42	גדגד	Gdgd	Gadgad	الجدجاد	al-Jidjād
43	יטבתה	Yṭbthh	Jotbathah	الطيّب	al-Ṭayyib
44	עברנה	ʿAbrnh	Abronah	العبر	al-ʿAbr
45	עצין	ʿAṣyn	Ezion-Geber	عصوان	ʿAṣwān
46	גבר	Gbr		بني جابر	Bani Jābir
47	הר ההר	Hr h-Hr	Mount Hor	الجبل	al-Jabal
48	אדום	Adum	Edom	الدوم	al-Dūm
49	ערד	ʿArd	Arad	نقيل عرد	Naqīl ʿArad
50	צלמנה	Ṣlmnh	Zalmonah	الصنمة / الصلم	al-Ṣanmah / al-Ṣalm
51	פונן	Phwnn	Phunon	الفنونة	al-Funūnah
52	אבת	Abth	Oboth	أبُت الذراع	Abut al-Dhirāʿ
53	עיי	ʿAyy	Ije-Abarim	العوّين	al-ʿAwwīn
54	העברים	h-ʿAbrym		عبر الجريبة	ʿAbr al-Jarībah
55	מואב	Muab	Moab	المواب	al-Muāb
56	דיבן	Dybn	Dibon-Gad	ذيبان	Dhībān
57	גד	Gd		جد – جدن	Jad / Jadn
58	עלמן	ʿAlmn	Almon-Diblathaim	الأعلوم	al-Uʿlūm
59	דבלתימה	Dblthymh		الدبيلة	al-Dabīlah
60	עברים	ʿAbrym	Abarim	المعبار	al-Miʿbār
61	נבו	Nbw	Nebo	النبو	al-Nabū
62	ירדן	Yrdn	The Jordan	وادي مور / اليردن	Wādi Mawr / al-Yardin
63	ירחו	Yrḥw	Jericho	قو يريح	Qū Yarīḥ
64	הישמת	h-Yshmth	Jesimoth	الشمايتين	al-Shamāyatayn
65	אבל	Abl	Abel-Shittim	الإبل	al-Ibl
66	השטים	h-Shaṭṭym		الشط	al-Shaṭṭ
67	קדש ברנע	Qdsh Brnʿ	Kadesh-Barnea	قدس ذو البُرع	Qadas dhul-Burʿ
68	זרד	Zrd	Zared	زريد	Zarīd
69	הר שעיר	Hr Sʿyr	Mount Seir	سعير	Saʿīr
70	ים המלח	Ym h-Mlḥ	Salt Sea	وادي الملح	Wādi al-Milḥ
71	עקרבים	ʿAqrbym	Akrabbim	حبيل العقارب	Ḥabīl al-ʿAqārib
72	חצר	Ḥṣr	Hazar-Addar	حضارة	Ḥaḍārah
73	אדר	Adr		الدور	al-Dūr
74	עצמנה	ʿAṣmnh	Azmon	عصيمة	ʿAṣīmah
75	חמת	Ḥmth	Hamath	حمة	Ḥamah
76	צדדה	Ṣddh	Zedad	سداد / صدد	Sadād / Ṣadad
77	זפרנה	Zphrnh	Ziphron	زفار	Zafār
78	חצר עינן	Ḥṣr ʿYnn	Hazar-Enan	بيت عنان	Bayt ʿAnān
79	שפמה	Shphm	Shepham	شافة	Shāfah
80	עין	ʿAyn	Ain	عين سباء	ʿAyn Sabāʾ
81	מריבת	Mrybth	Meribath	ميراب	Mīrāb
82	דן	Dn	Dan	أدان / أذان	Adān / Adhān
83	צער	Ṣʿr	Zoar	صُعر	Ṣuʿr
84	בית פעור	Byth Phʿur	Beth-Peor	الفغرة	al-Faghrah

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